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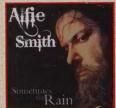












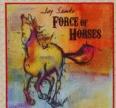


















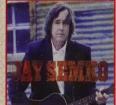




















































SPECIAL THAN FOR PENGUIN EGGS READERS

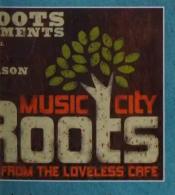
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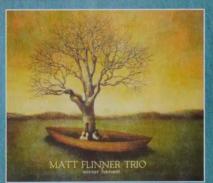
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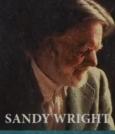
R E C O R D S is the home to many ground-breaking artists on the UK roots & folk scene today. Since the label's inception in 2008, Navigator releases have received awards and nominations from the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards & the Irish Music Awards. Add to that the regular and glowing album reviews in the majority of the UK music press (Q, Mojo, fRoots, Word, The Guardian, The Independent and many more), and it's easy to see why Navigator is one of the most critically acclaimed new labels the UK.















SONGWRITING BAND CAMP with BIDINIBAND July 31 - August 3

Bidiniband will be bringing their rock and educational arsenal to Wells for a weeking Songwriting Band Camp program. Each day will feature a series of workshops: songwriting with Dave Bidini (ex-Rheostatics); improvising with bassist Doug Friesen (John K Samson; Peter Elkas); arranging with Bidiniband (featuring guitarist Paul Linklater), and production with drummer Don Kerr (Ron Sexsmith). The students will work on their sangs in the morning, then work with the full band in the afternoon, honing their craft in the presence of four compelling and seasoned musicians, all of whom have an established pedigree in musical education and live performance.

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ISLAND MOUNTAIN ARTS Wells/Barkerville, BC, Canada

penguin eggs

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10942 - 80 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta
Canada, T6G 0R1
Tel: (780) 433-8287
Fax: (780) 437-4603
www.penguineggs.ab.ca
e-mail: penguineggs@shaw.ca
Editor: Roddy Campbell
Managing Editor: Annemarie Hamilton
Production: Doug Swanson
Circulation: Deborah Thrall

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album Penguin Eggs — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for many young, gifted performers.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. He now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes Penguin Eggs such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones's Penguin Eggs is available through Topic Records.

Penguin Eggs magazine is published and printed in Canada and acknowledges the generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.





editorial

The Republican presidential candidates debate is on CNN as I consider the life of Woody
Guthrie. Debate, though, seems too charitable a description. The appalling intellectual worth of the four combatants resembles that of schoolyard bullies as they collectively rail on progressive legislation that benefits the underprivileged.
Migrant workers merit singular mention. Just as troubling are the anti-trade-union advertisements that run between questions. Woody's moving Deportee inevitably hovers in my consciousness.

Named after the 28th president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson Guthrie was born July 14, 1912—this summer marks the centenary of his birth. But before the canonization, let's remember he was human and displayed all the strengths and weaknesses that entails. Joe Klein's creditable biography, Woody Guthrie: A Life, points out his behaviour was often erratic. He frequently left his wives and children to fend for themselves as he rambled across the U.S.A. "I've made 26 record albums and had a bastard child for each one of them," he once boasted. And yet he died of Huntington's chorea—a genetic disorder he inherited from his mother, Nora. Its symptoms include a progressive loss of mental ability, control of movement, and changes in personality.

Guthrie's endearing legacy lies in the compassion and outrage he articulated on behalf of the destitute families he found in migrant camps, on picket lines, or stranded by the side of America's highways in the wake of the Great Depression. They were primarily his people: Okies who fled poverty and a drought that reduced the Texas panhandle to a Dust Bowl. More than 500,000 of them migrated to California. There Woody saw starving children with bloated bellies, dysentery and worms, living next to orchards overflowing with fruit. It radicalized him and inspired some of his greatest songs: I Ain't Got No Home, Pastures of Plenty and This Land Is Your Land-the latter written in response to the smug patriotism of Irving Berlin's God Bless America.

Not surprisingly, it became the *Marseilles* for the Occupy Wall Street movement. As the world economy still reels in the aftermath of a banking crisis created by an unaccountable, criminal oligarchy in Lower Manhattan, as their political contemporaries tilt at foreign and domestic windmills on my television, Woody's immortal *Pretty Boy Floyd* remains prophetically astute: *Yes, as through this world I've wandered/I've seen lots of funny men/Some will rob you with a six-gun/And some with a fountain pen*.

Progress, it seems, is vastly overrated.

- By Roddy Campbell

cover feature

42 Matt Andersen released three albums in 2011. They include his much-celebrated Coal Mining Blues. Voted Entertainer of the Year at the recent Maple Blues Awards, Andersen's rising star stems from his amazing animated live shows. Roddy Campbell books a front-row seat.

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quotable

"These days bluegrass has gone the direction of sounding like disposable modern country music. The International Bluegrass Music Association is worried about hippy jam bands being called bluegrass but not about the effects of crappy modern country music."

- Ivan Rosenberg

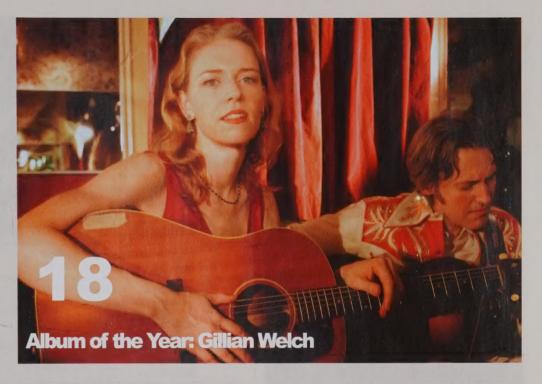
"I used to think he needed a kick up the arse. They said he was going through this terrible depression but I've been through depression and the last thing you need is to go into the studio with a 30-piece orchestra."

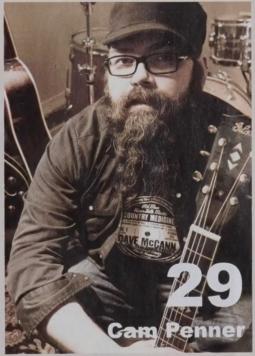
- Danny Thompson reflects on Nick Drake

"People outside of Quebec often think we're satanic in some way." — Belzébuth

"Being weekend warriors you can only travel so far. I wanted to do more—travel and not just have to worry about playing Friday and Saturday gigs. I wanted to work full time at it so I just decided to head out on my own and focus on getting out of bars and into the folk clubs. I wanted a taste for that,"

— Matt Andersen









Rant Maggie Rant one of Canada's most exciting Celtic fusion ensembles" Robert Reid: Waterloo Record New Record Coming Soon! **UPCOMING 2012** Spring/Summer SHOWS MAR 3 - Toronto, ON (CAN) Jubilee United Church w Amadeus Choir MAR 16 - St. Catharines, ON (CAN) St. Columba Anglican Church St. Patrick's Day Eve Show MAR 17 - Toronto, ON (CAN) Hugh's Room - St. Patrick's Day (book now, last year sold out) 416-446-0188 APR 14 - Fergus, ON (CAN) Tartan Day Celebrations JUN 16 - Peterborough, ON (CAN) Reserborough Celtic Festival - Kalamazoo, MI (USA) Kalamazoo Irish Festival UL 12 - Windsor, ON (CAN) MacKenzie Hall JUL 13 - Bellefountaine, OH (USA) The Holland Theatre JUL 14 - Saline, MI (USA) Saline Celtic Festival JUL 15 - Chicago, IL (USA) Chicago Irish Festival JUL 20 - Quadra Island, BC (CAN) Hariott Bay Inn -22 - Cowichan Valley, BC (CAN) Islands Folk Festival AUG 4 - Maxville, ON (CAN) Glengarry Highland Games AUG 5 - Montreal, QC (CAN) Montreal Highland Games AUG 11 - Fergus, ON (CAN) Fergus Highland Games AUG 17 - Three Rivers, MI (USA) The Riviera Theatre AUG 18 - Evart, MI (USA) Summer Musicale What people are saying about RMR... "dexterous musical interplay and measured use of an array of Latin. African and Middle Eastern rhythms that they overlay on their Celtic stylings to take things in new and entertaining directions " Scene Magazine, London, ON "RMR is a great band. They packed the house and the audience left dancing. I can't wait to have them back." Holmes Hooke, Hughs Room, Toronto, ON

btw, my jaw is still on the ground - RMR is a

phenomenal band! I and everyone in the

house were literally blown away by your

outstanding artistry and warmth on stage." Lisa Weitz, LW Communications, Toronto, ON

For more info & all event details.

www.rantmaggierant.com

matt andersen's all-time top 10

Rod Stewart Every Picture Tells A Story (Mercury)

Stan Rogers
From Coffee House to Concert Hall (Fogartys Cove Music)

Hot Toddy
Shee Factory (Hot Toddy)

Buddy Guy Blues Singer (Silvertone)

Creedence Clearwater Revival Cosmo's Foctory (Fantasy)

Jim Croce Home Recordings (Universal Music)

Jimi Hendrix
Are You Experienced (MCA)

Eric Clapton Unplugged (Reprise)

Neil Young
Freedom (Reprise)

Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee Sonny and Brownie (A&M)

Matt Andersen's latest record, Push Record: The Banff Sessions is released by Borealis Records. Our feature on Matt runs on page 42.



fred's records top 5

1. The Once
Row Upon Row Of The People They Know (Borealis)

2. Dardanelles
Eastern Light (Independent)

3. Andrew James O'Brien Songs for Searchers (O'Brien Music)

4. The Once
The Once (Borealis)

5. Shanneyganock
Tribute To The McNulty Family (Avondale)

Based on album sales for November, December and January at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 1G5



wffms top 10

1.	The Black Keys
	El Camino (Nonesuch)

- 2. John K. Samson Provincial (Anti)
- 3. Matt Anderson
 Coal Mining Blues (Busted Flat Records)
- 4. Ry Cooder
 Pull Up Some Dust And Sit Down (Nonesuch)
- 5. Jim Cuddy Skyscroper Soul (Warner)
- 6. Blackie & the Rodeo Kings
 Kings & Queens (FU:M)
- 7. Oh My Darling
 Sweet Nostalgia (Independent)
- 8. Crooked Brothers
 Lowrence, Where's Your Knife? (Transdigital 66)
- 9. Wailin' Jennys
 Bright Morning Stars (True North)
- The Once
 Row Upon Row Of The People They Know (Borealis)

Album sales for November, December and January at the Winnipeg Folk Festival Music Store, 203-211 Bannatyne Ave., Winnipeg, MB., R3B 3P2.

groundfloor music top 10

- Bry Webb
 Provider (Idee Fixe)
- 2. The Good Lovelies
 Under The Mistletoe (Six Shooter)
- 3. Paul Simon
 So Beautiful or So What (Hear)
- 4. Gillian Welch
 The Harrow and the Harvest (Outside)
- 5. Blackie & the Rodeo Kings Kings & Queens (FU:M)
- 6. Willie Nelson Remember Me Vol. 1 (R&J))
- 7. Willie Nelson & Wynton Marsalis Here We Go Again (Blue Note)
- 8. Gregg Allman
 Low Country Blues (Rounder)
- 9. Ballake Sissoko & Vincent Segal Chamber Music (Six Degrees)
- 10. Big Harp
 White Hat (Saddle Creek))

Based on album sales for November, December and January at Groundfloor Music, 13 Quebec St., Guelph, ON, N1H 2T1

highlife top 10

- 1. Tom Waits
 Bod As Me (Anti)
- 2. Kevin Finseth
 The Captive Road (Highlife)
- 3. Bombino
 Agadez (Cumbancha)
- 4. Feist
 Metals (Arts & Crafts)
- 5. Charles Bradley
 No Time For Dreaming (Dunham)
- 6. Danger Mouse & Daniele Luppi
- 7. Boom Booms
 Hot Rum (Lit Fuse)
- 8. Ry Cooder
 Pull Up Some Dust And Sit Down (Nonesuch)
- 9. Tommy T
 Prester John Sessions (Easy Star)
- 10. The Black Keys El Comino (Nonesuch)

Based on album sales for November, December and January at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

permanent records top 10

- 1. Middle Brother
 Middle Brother (Partisan)
- Various Artists
 Lost Notebooks of Hank Williams (Columbia)
- The Little Willies
 For The Good Times (Milking Bull)
- 4. Tom Waits
 Bud As Me (Anti)
- The Barr Brothers
 The Barr Brothers (Secret City)
- 6. Ryan Adams
 Ashes & Fire (Paxam)
- 7. Colleen Brown
 Dirt (Colleen Brown)
- 8. Ray Bonneville
 Bad Man's Blood (Red House)
- 9. Charlie Haden/Hank Jones Come Sunday (Decca)
- 10. Laura Marling
 A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon)

Based on album sales for November, December and January at Permanent Records, 8126 Gateway Blvd. Edmonton, AB, T6E 4B1





sillions top 10

- 1. Fred Pellerin
 C'est un monde (Disques Tempête)
- 2. Leonard Cohen
 Old Ideas (Columbia)
- 3. Richard Desjardins
 L'existoire (Distribution Select)
- 4. Gianmaria Testa
- 5. Adam Cohen
 Like A Man (Rezolute Music)
- 6. Chloé Sainte-Marie
 Une étoile m'a dit (GSI Musique)
- 7. Gilles Vigneault
 Retrouvailles 2 (Distribution Select)
- 8. Strada
 Colinda: Noëls de Provence (Analekta)
- 9. Philippe B
 Variations Fantômes (Bonsound)
- 10. Barr Brothers
 Borr Brothers (Secret City Records)

Based on album sales for November, December and January at Sillons, 1149 Avenue Cartier, Quebec, QC, G1R 2S9.

soundscapes top 10

- 1 Sandro Perri
- Peist
 Metals (Arts & Crafts)
- The Black Keys
 El Camino (Nonesuch)
- 4. Tom Waits
 Bad As Me (Anti)
- 5. Bry Webb Provider (Idee Fixe)
- 6. Coeur De Pirate
 Blonde (Grosse Boite/Select)
- 7. Kathleen Edwards
 Voyageur (Maplemusic/Universal)
- 8. Bon Iver
 Bon Iver (Jagjaguwar)
- 9. Gillian Welch
 The Harrow and the Harvest (Acony)
- 10. Ohbijou Metal Meets (Last Gang)

Based on album sales for November, December and January at Soundscapes, 572 College St., Toronto, On, M6G 1B3.

ckua top 20

- 1. Tom Waits
- 2. Jim Cuddy Skyscroper Soul (Warner)
- 3. Wilco
 The Whole Love (Anti)
- 4. Wynton Marsalis & Eric Clapton
 Play the Blues: Live From Jazz At Lincoln Center (Rhino)
- 5. Jane Hawley
 Jane Hawley & Aunt Betty's Band (Independent)
- 6. Steve Pineo's Blue Monday Trio
 Hardwired for the Blues (Independent)
- 7. Chris Isaak
 Beyond the Sun (Wicked Game)
- 8. The Little Willies
 For the Good Times (Milking Bull)
- 9. David Myles
 Into the Sun (Little Tiny)
- 10. Indigo Girls
 Beauty Queen Sister (Vanguard)
- 11. Various Artists
 This One's For Him: A Tribute to Guy Clark (Smelly Cat)
- 12. Kirby Sewell Band
 Bought Myself a Hammer (Smelly Cat)
- 13. Terry McDade & the McDades
 Winter Rose (Free Radio)
- 14. Colleen Brown
 Dirt (Independent)
- 15. Noam Pikelny
 Beat the Devil and Carry a Rail (Compass)
- 16. Crooked Still
 Friends of Full (Signature Sounds)
- 17. Mighty Popo Gakondo (Borealis)
- 18. Dan Mangan Oh Fortune (Easy Star)
- 19. Maria Muldaur Steady Love (Stony Plain)
- 20. The Decemberists
 Long Live the King EP (Capitol)

Based on the most-played folk, roots and world music dics on ckua radio – www.ckua.org throughout November, December and January.



News-Gossip-Rumour-Tattle

Love Over and Over, a musical tribute to the late Kate McGarrigle, will take place June 16 at Toronto's Massey Hall. Joe Boyd, who produced several of Kate and Anna McGarrigle albums, will oversee the project as artistic director. In 2011, Boyd contributed to both London and New York celebrations of Kate's career. These shows featured numerous McGarrigle friends and family as well as the likes of Richard and Linda Thompson, Emmylou Harris and Nick Cave. As of press time, organizers confirmed Kate's son, Rufus Wainwright, will participate. The event takes place during the Luminato Festival of Arts and Creativity, which runs June 8-17.

It will include free concerts in Toronto's David Pecaut Square featuring **K'Naan** (June 10), Rufus Wainwright (June 10), **Afrocubism** (June 12), **Loreena McKennitt** (June 13) and **Michael Franti and Spearhead** (June 14). Now in its sixth year, Luminato is a charitable, not-for-profit, multi-disciplinary celebration of theatre, dance, music, literature, food, visual arts, fashion, film, magic, and more.

The Georgian Bay Folk Society (GBFS) has named Juno Award-winning songwriter **James Keelaghan** as the new artistic director of the Owen Sound Summerfolk festival. Keelaghan signed a two-year contract with the society in December. The

GBFS oversees the running of Summerfolk. He takes over the booking and programming from **Richard Knechtel**, who chose to focus on his musical career rather than remain as AD.

"I've been interested in programming a festival for a number of years now, and have been looking around for opportunities," Keelaghan told *Penguin Eggs*. "When the job at Summerfolk came up I was really excited, because it's always been one of my favourite festivals and I have a long history with it. I first played it in 1984 as a guitar player for **Margaret Christl**. It was one of the first festivals to hire me as myself, outside of Alberta and I like their ethic. It's always been a real folk festival rather than a 'music festival'."

Part of the lure of accepting the position at Summerfolk is the opportunity to tour less and spend more time at home with his wife and two young sons.

"I'd been looking to cut down on touring in any case. Miche and I have a six year old and a two year old at home and I want to spend more time with the family. This sits well with that plan. That having been said, there is still more than enough touring to satisfy me."

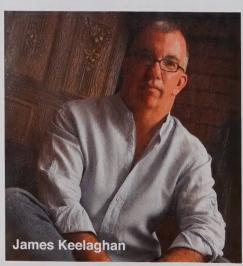
Keelaghan joins a festival on the brink of folding last October. Financial hardship caused by heavy rain during last year's event wiped out its contingency funds, which led GBFS's president, Ruth Parsons, to predict that unless suficient funds were raised the society would fold. That crisis appears to have been averted thanks to a successful fundraising drive and concert that, combined, raised \$25,000.

Summerfolk runs Aug. 17-19 at Kelso Beach in Owen Sound, ON. Advance tickets are available at www.summerfolk.org

Steve Dawson and his band, in conjunction with The Capilano University Performing Arts Centre, will host a monthly concert series at the The Electric Owl, 928 Main St., Vancouver. The Black Hen House **Band** – the man himself, natch (guitars, pedal steel, and banjo), Keith Lowe (bass), Geoff Hicks (drums and percussion), and in rotation, either Daniel Lapp (fiddle, trumpet), or Chris Gestrin (keyboards) - will open for and then back up a different artist each month. Multiple Juno Awardwinning rock, blues and neo-swing guitarist Colin James will guest March 25, Oakland, CA, Grammy Award-winning country blues picker Alvin Youngblood Heart April 29, and New Orlean's jazz vocalist John Bouteé May 27. All performances will be acoustic-based and the material will diverge from the guests usual set list. For tickets and information: www.blackhenmusic.com









Still in Vancouver, the city's Rogue Folk Club marks its 25th anniversary this year. One of the busiest clubs of its kind in the country, the Rogue presents 50-60 concerts a year at cosy St. James Hall in Kitsilano. After a quarter of a century founder and artistic director **Steve Edge** still remains the driving force behind the club that books numerous national and international performers primarily from the Celtic tradition.

000

The Staurday Nigh Special Folk Club in Calgary celebrates its 35th anniversary in 2012. Quite possibly the most successful club in the country, it has sold out its annual series for the best part of 30 years. It now has a waiting list of over 300. Coounder and Artistic Director Chuck Frank has overseen the club's growth around the city before settling at the Braeside Community Hall in south Calgary. Founded to promote local talent, it gave the likes of James Keelaghan and Jann Arden their first non-bar gigs.

To honour this milestone, volunteers and season holders will receive a free CD recorded by the club's house band, **The Beagle Boys**. Over the years the Special has featured the cream of Alberta talent, including **Ian Tyson**, national performers such as John Allan Cameron – Frank's absolute highlight – and international acts the likes of **Tom Paxton**.

000

Tommy Makem has been nominated as a potential inductee into the Irish American Hall of Fame. Makem was born and raised in Keady, County Armagh, Northern Ireland, but at the behest of Liam Clancy, emigrated to the U.S.A in 1955. His celebrated mother, Sarah Makem, had a rich

repertoire of traditional Irish songs, which she passed along to her son. In America Tommy co-founded the massively popular **Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem**, recorded numerous solo albums as well as several with Liam Clancy.

The Irish American Heritage Center, based in Chicago, created the hall of fame in 2010. Last year's inductees included **John F. Kennedy** and **Henry Ford**. Makem is nominated along with **Bing Crosby** and **F. Scott Fitzgerald**. Maken died of lung cancer in 2007 aged 74 in Dover, NH.

000

On a whim, **Old Man Luedecke** joined forces with Montreal neo-jugband **Lake of Stew** and recorded and released a seventrack EP, *Sing All About It*, in November. It's available as a pay-what-you-want download through NoiseTrade (www.noisetrade.com/oldmanluedecke).

"They dropped by my house in Nova Scotia for a visit like the **Carter Family** visiting **Jimmie Rodgers**," says Luedecke on the NoiseTrade website. "We ate and hung out and sang together. We've never played a gig and had never played together. I didn't even know all their names at first. On little more than a whim we went to the Old Confidence Lodge studio in downtown Riverport and put these songs together with a bit of joy and hard work."

000

Prior to his death in 2002, prodigious American folklorist and ethnomusicologist **Alan Lomax** envisioned a "global jukebox" that would feature the material he gathered during years of fieldwork. A decade after his death technology has finally caught up with Lomax's astuteness.

His massive archive – some 5,000 hours of sound recordings, 400,000 feet of film, 3,000 videotapes, 5,000 photographs and numerous manuscripts – is being digitized so that this complte collection is accessible online. About 17,000 music tracks will be available for free streaming by March, and later some of that music may be for sale as CDs or digital downloads.

To commemorate what would have been Lomax's 97th birthday, Jan 31, the Global Jukebox label released *The Alan Lomax Collection From the American Folklife Center*, a digital download sampler of 16 field recordings from different locales and stages of Lomax's career. For more information visit: www.culturalequity.org

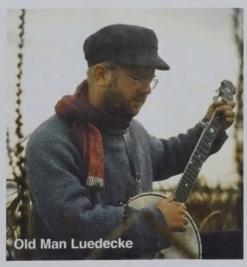
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It's official: "Folk music ... has become the coolest sound in town," trumpeted the U.K.'s daily broadsheet, The Telegraph, back in April. The basis of the story was the commercial success of Mumford and Sons – two million copies of their Rumour And Sigh album sold worldwide - and last issue's cover feature, Laura Marling, voted Female Artist of the Year at the Brit Awards. The evidence has now emerged that they have, indeed, sparked a sales boom in folk music. U.K. folk album sales increased 20 per cent in 2011, according to the trade body the British Phonographic Industry (BPI). While that increase appears impressive folk music still only accounted for 1.6 per cent of all U.K. album sales in 2011. The BPI noted that other acts such as Seasick Steve and Bellowhead contributed to increased interest in folk music.

40 0

The widely influential *Anthology of American Folk Music*, edited by **Harry Smith**







and released in 1952 by Folkways Records, was among 25 new recordings selected for the 2012 Grammy Hall of Fame. This year's batch also included Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs' Foggy Mountain Breakdown, Bukka White's Fixin' to Die, Big Bill Broonzy's Key to the Highway and Mahalia Jackson's Precious Lord, Take My Hand. Their inclusion will bring the total number of recordings chosen for the Hall of Fame to 906.

John Cohen, a founding member of the New Lost City Ramblers has made a wonderful little cartoon about the first time he met Harry Smith on the Streets of New York City. It can be seen at http://vimeo. com/32711338

As part of the centenary celebrations marking Woody Guthrie's birth in Okemah, OK, in 1912, his writings, recordings and artwork will go on permanent display in Tulsa, OK, later this year.

Guthrie's archives were bought by The George Kaiser [Charitable] Family Foundation. It plans to open a four-building arts centre to house the collection. It had been housed previously in the home of Nora Guthrie, Woody's daughter.

It features original musical recordings, handwritten songbooks and almost 3,000 song lyrics as well as more than 700 pieces of artwork, letters, postcards as well as a handwritten copy of Guthrie's anthem, This Land is Your Land.

The foundation said it would open the Woody Guthrie Centre in Tulsa, by the end of 2012 to mark the centennial of the singer's birth. He died of Huntington's disease, a neurodegenerative condition, in 1967.

The 15th Annual Maple Blues Awards

were held Jan. 16, in Koerner Hall, Toronto. Multiple winners included Matt Andersen and MonkeyJunk, both of whom took home three awards each, while Suzie Vinnick took away two.

Hosted by Shakura S'aida and Treasa Levasseur, the gala included live performances from Joe Murphy, Rita Chiarelli, Fathead, Bill Johnson, Monkey Junk and the awards gala house combo, The Maple Blues Band. Winners included

Winners by category included: Entertainer of the Year - Matt Andersen; Electric act of the Year - MonkeyJunk; Acoustic act of the Year - Matt Andersen; Male vocalist of the Year - Matt Andersen; Female vocalist of the Year - Suzie Vinnick; New Artist or Group of the Year - Sabrina Weeks & Swing Cat Bounce; Recording of the Year - To Behold, MonkeyJunk; Songwriter of the Year - Suzie Vinnick; Blues with a Feeling (Lifetime Achievement) - Paul James; BB King International Artist of the Year Award - Gregg Allman; Guitar Player of the Year – Steve Strongman; Harmonica Player of the Year - Carlos del Junco; Piano/Keyboard Player of the Year - Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne; Horn Player of the Year; Chris Whiteley; Drummer of the Year – Matt Sobb: Bassist of the Year - Alec Fraser. Blues Booster of the Year - Liz Sykes.

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Actor William Shatner will host the Juno Awards gala presentation ceremony, April 1, in Ottawa. Nominees in each category include: Roots & Traditional Album Of The Year: Solo" Bruce Cockburn, Small Source of Comfort; Craig Cardiff Partick, Floods & Fires; Dave Gunning, A Tribute To John Allan Cameron; David Francey,

Late Edition: Lindi Ortega, Little Red Boots.roots & Traditional Album Of The Year: Group: Good Lovelies; Let The Rain Fall: The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left Behind; The Once, Row Upon Row Of The People We Know; The Wailin' Jennys, Bright Morning Stars; Twilight Hotel, When The Wolves Go Blind.

Blues Album Of The Year: Bill Johnson, Still Blue; David Gogo, Soul Bender; Harrison Kennedy, Shame The Devil; MonkeyJunk, To Behold; Suzie Vinnick, Me 'n' Mabel

World Music Album Of The Year: Aboulaye Kone et Bolo Kan, Afo Gné; Aline Morales, Flores Tambores e Amores; Azam Ali, From Night To The Edge Of Day; Kiran Ahluwalia Kiran, Aam Zameen: common ground; Socalled, Sleepover.

Navigator Records, home to several ground-breaking UK artists including Bellowhead, Spiers & Boden, Chris Wood, Kris Drever and John McCusker, will release their discs in North America through Nashville-based Compass Records. For the full roster go to www. compassrecords.com

Sultans of String are set to record a fourth album. This time with a symphony orchestra and need financial help to cover the costs, estimated around \$60,000. The band, however, have come up with numerous creative ways to reward those who contribute pledges to their coffers. These include include concert tickets, ipods crammed with music, a home

concert, even the Executive Producer credit is available for a price. For more information go to www.kapipal.com/sultansofstring



The Canadian Folk Music Awards 2011

The seventh annual Canadian Folk Music Awards took place at the Isabel Bader Theatre in Toronto, Dec. 4. The bilingual event included live performances from Jim Byrnes and Steve Dawson, Rose Cousins, Soul Inluence, De Temps Antan and Loreena McKennitt. Mutiple winners included Bruce Cockburn, Dave Gunning and Genticorum, who all picked up two awards each. Cockburn's manager, Bernie Finkelstein, accepted on his behalf. Jane Harbury, the veteran Toronto-based publicist received the inaugural Unsung Hero award, which celebrates those who work behind the scenes in Canada's folk music community.

The complete list of winners include: Traditional Album of the Year: Genticorum - Nagez Rameursl; Contemporary Album of the Year: Bruce Cockburn, Small Source of Comfort; Childrens' Album of the Year: Benoît Archambault, Les pourquoi; Traditional Singer of the Year: Dave Gunning, A Tribute to John Allan Cameron; Contemporary Singer of the Year: Suzie Vinnick, Me 'n' Mabel; Instrumental Solo Artist/Album of the Year: Jayme Stone, Room of Wonders: Instrumental Group of the Year: The Creaking Tree String Quartet, Sundogs; Vocal Group of the Year: Good Lovelies, Let The Rain Fall; Ensemble of the year: Genticorum, Nagez Rameurs; Solo Artist of the Year: Bruce Cockburn, Small Source of Comfort; English Songwriter of the Year: Lynn Miles, Fall for Beauty; French Songwriter of the Year: Alexandre Poulin, Une lumière allumée; Aboriginal Songwriter of the Year: Vince Fontaine, Songs For Turtle Island; World Artist of the Year (solo): Kiran Ahluwalia, aam zameen : common ground; World Artist of the Year (group): Minor Empire, Second Nature; New/Emerging Artist of the Year: Dave Gunning, A Tribute to John Allan Cameron; Producer of the Year: Mark Howard, David Travers-Smith, Bright Morning Stars (The Wailin' Jennys); Pushing the Boundaries: Geoff Berner, Victory Party; Young Performer of the Year: Molly Thomason, Beauty Queen.

All photos by Thom Fountain – the official CFMA photographer. Colockwise from the top, left to right: hosts Shelagh Rogers and Benoit Bourque; Molly Thomason and Lynn Miles; Soul Influence; Steve Dawson; Rose Cousins and Loreena McKennitt.



Swansongs =



Etta James 1938-2012

Etta James, the talented yet often troubled R&B, soul, blues and jazz diva, died Jan. 20, from leukemia. She was 73, writes Roddy Campbell.

Legendary producer Jerry Wexler once called her "the greatest of all modern blues singers". Best known for her torch song At Last, the raucous, hard-driving Tell Mama and the heart-breaking ballad I'd Rather Go Blind—a No. 1 hit in the U.K. for the British blues band Chicken Shack and its singer Christine Perfect, better known now as Christine McVie of Fleetwood Mac—James made her reputation through Chicago's famed Chess Records in the early '60s.

Born Jamesetta Hawkins in Los Angeles on Jan. 25, 1938, the illegitimate daughter of a 14-year-old African-American girl and a white father, James maintained her father was the pool shark Rudolf (Minnesota Fats) Wanderone celebrated in the movie *The Hustler*.

Raised mainly by friends and relatives, she began singing when her grandparents took her to church. Moving to San Francisco in 1950 with her mother, Etta formed The Creolettes and auditioned for R&B band leader Johnny Otis. He was smitten by her voice, inverted her name, and took her to Los Angeles to record *Roll with Me Henry*. They changed the suggestive title,

however, to *The Wallflower* because of complaints from radio disc jockeys. It topped the R&B charts in 1955 and her followup *Good Rockin' Dady* made it to No. 12.

As a teenager on tours with Otis, Johnny (Guitar) Watson, Ike and Tina Turner, and Little Richard, James encountered and quickly embraced much debauchery. In her autobiography *Rage To Survive*, James describes her drug addictions in sordid detail.

Etta James landed at Chess Records in 1960. The best albums of her years there include At Last (1961), Etta James Rocks the House (1964) and Tell Mama (1968). A fictionalized account of her time at Chess is the basis of the film Cadillac Records. In the movie Beyoncé plays the part of James.

Due to her lifestyle, and a \$300-a-day heroin habit, James's career began to stall. Numerous arrests for drugs and petty crimes—passing dud cheques and stealing cars—meant time in jail. She had problems with her weight, too, ballooning to 400 pounds. And yet she made consistently good recordings, particularly *Deep In the Night* (1978) and *R&B Dynamite* (1987). In 1988 she signed herself into the Betty Ford Clinic. From then on, she began to claw her way back—going on to win six Grammy Awards and an induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993.

The likes of Adele, Beyoncé and Black Eyed Peas frontman Will.i.am all consider James an influence.

Johnny Otis 1921-2012

Rhythm and blues renaissance man Johnny Otis, who discovered the likes of Etta James, Little Richard, Little Willie John and Esther Phillips, produced records for Big Mama Thornton, wrote the hit *Every Beat of My Heart* for Gladys Knight and The Pips and scored his own celebrated chart-topper, *Willie and the Hand Jive*, died Jan. 17 in Los Angeles. He was 90, writes Roddy Campbell.

Born John Veliotes to Greek immigrants Dec 28, 1921, in Vallejo, CA, he was raised in Berkeley, where his father ran a grocery store in a largely black community. Changing his name to Otis, he immersed himself in African-American culture from an early age and said he considered himself "black by persuasion." He started playing drums with big bands and jazz combos in

his early 20s. At the suggestion of Nat King Cole he moved to Los Angeles and joined Harlan Leonard's Kansas City Rockets, the house band at Club Alabam on the thriving Central Avenue jazz-blues-R&B club scene. As a musician (he played piano and vibraphone in addition to drums), Otis can be heard on Johnny Ace's *Pledging My Love*, Charles Brown's *Drifting Blues* and other seminal rhythm and blues records, as well as on jazz recordings by Lester Young and Illinois Jacquet.

Otis started his own big band in 1945 and that year recorded his first hit, *Harlem Nocturne*. As big bands fell out of favour, he stripped his down to a few horns and a rhythm section and had 15 singles on *Bill-board* magazine's R&B charts from 1949 to 1952. His *Double Crossing Blues* stayed at No. 1 for nine weeks. *Willie and the Hand Jive*, though, became his best known song. Recorded in 1958 to a Bo Diddley beat, it has since been covered by the likes of Eric Clapton, George Thorogood & The Destroyers, and Cliff Richard and The Shadows.

As a talent scout, Otis discovered an incredible amount of talent, a teenage Etta James being possibly his greatest triumph. At Otis's induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994, James referred to him as her guru. He received similar honours from the Rhythm & Blues Foundation and the Blues Foundation. Ironically, Otis and James died within three days of each other.

Not only did Otis play and record, he ran



Swansongs =

a night club, The Barrelhouse, in Watts, Los Angeles, and hosted early radio and television shows. While he always returned to playing music in later years, touring with his son, guitarist Shuggie Otis, Johnny's eclectic interests also included politics, art and growing organic food.

Hubert Sumlin 1931-2011

For the best part of two tumultuous decades, guitarist Hubert Sumlin stood shoulder to shoulder with a force of nature—the extraordinary blues singer Howlin' Wolf. Sumlin played a prominent role on all of Wolf's classic Chess recordings including Smokestack Lightnin', Wang Dang Doodle, Back Door Man, Killing Floor, Red Rooster, Spoonful and, in particular, Three Hundred Pounds of Joy. As a result Sumlin would inspire such rock guitarist luminaries as Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix.

Hubert Charles Sumlin died Dec. 4 of heart failure. He was 80, writes Roddy Campbell.

Sumlin told *Living Blues* magazine in 1989 that the first time he saw Wolf perform he had to climb up on a pile of boxes to peer through a club window. Fatefully, he slipped, fell into the room and landed on Wolf. After the gig, Wolf drove him home. "I followed him ever since," said Sumlin.

Born on Nov. 16, 1931, in Greenwood, MS, but raised in Hughes, AK, he received his first guitar at 6 and aspired to be a jazz guitarist. By his teens he was playing for local functions, sometimes with harmonica player James Cotton.

He met Wolf while performing around West Helena, AK, and first recorded with him for Sam Phillips, at Sun Studios in Memphis in 1953.

The same year Wolf left the south for Chicago, but sent for Sumlin in the spring of 1954. The 23-year-old guitarist started out on rhythm guitar but graduated to lead. There he stayed until Wolf's death in 1976. Sumlin would go on to make numerous solo recordings, the best of which include *Heart & Soul* (1989) and *I Know You* (1998). His *About Them Shoes* (2005) featured performances by Keith Richards, Eric Clapton, Levon Helm, David Johansen and James Cotton.

In 2002 Sumlin was diagnosed with cancer and had a lung removed but continued to perform with an oxygen tank at his side, when his health permitted. The *New York Times* reported that Keith Richards assisted Sumlin with his medical bills. The Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger and Richards covered the full expense of Sumlin's burial, according to *American Blues Scene* website.

Césaria Évora 1941-2011

The celebrated Cape Verdean singer Césaria Évora, who won the Best Contemporary World Music Album Grammy in 2004 for her album *Voz D'Amor*, died in hospital on her native island of São Vicente on Dec. 17. She was 70, writes Roddy Campbell.

Known as the Barefoot Diva because she always performed without shoes, Évora sang in Kriolu, a Creole language mixing Portuguese with the west African dialects of her enslaved ancestors. The



minor-key morna ballads she sang with such stoic feeling reflected themes of love and longing, poverty and immigration—all constants to Cape Verdeans.

Cape Verde, comprised of 10 islands, is located 570 kilometres off the coast of Senegal. It gained independence from Portugal in 1975.

Évora was born in the port city of Mindelo on Aug. 27, 1941. her international career really began with the French release, La Diva Aux Pieds Nus (Barefoot Diva) in 1988. From France her popularity spread and her 1995 album Cesaria was released in more than a dozen countries and earned her first Grammy nomination.

Her long fondness for whisky, brandy and cigarettes, though, contributed to her ailing health. In 2008, Evora suffered a stroke while on tour in Australia and later underwent open heart surgery. She retired in September due to illness.



Penguin Eggs also notes other passings in brief: Cult Scottish songwriter Jackie Levin, who released more than 20 albums, either as a solo act or with his band Doll By Doll, died Nov. 15, aged 61. Janey Buchan, sister of Enoch Kent and a pillar of the Scottish folk revival, died Jan. 14, aged 85. One of the very few non-white popular U.K. folksingers, Johnny Silvo died Dec. 18, aged 75. Drummer and songwriter Keith Hartley, who led his own blues-rock band at Woodstock and recorded frequently with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, died Nov. 26, aged 67.

The Big Buzz



Layah Jane

In the liner notes to her last disc—the L partially fan and grant-funded *Honey* (2010)—Toronto musician Layah Jane describes herself as a "song-catcher and creator." I catch up with the sweet-singing songwriter, who describes her music as "folk-soul", at F'Coffee, a java joint in Toronto's trendy Leslieville neighbourhood. Between sips of tea, she admits that she once despised the term "folksinger" but more recently she's embraced the moniker.

"Early in my career, I had connotations of stuffy, traditional folk music, which wasn't what I was interested in," Jane explains. "I was excited by other artists who were genre-bending. When people referred to me as a folk singer/songwriter, I would be like, 'that's not what I'm trying to do'. As I've gotten older, I'm mellowing and I've reclaimed the term, which, for me, means any music 'for the people.' At its core, folk music is about community and honest, authentic communication.

"I also really like the term roots," she adds. "It's an awesome word. The connotation means 'from the ground up,' which is what the folk community is all about."

Growing up in Toronto, Jane was surrounded by a lot of roots music—1960s and '70s Canadian singer/songwriters such as Joni Mitchell and Bruce Cockburn. Her dad was a closet songwriter; a psychotherapist by day, he wrote songs by night—finally releasing a disc of his own material a few

years back, which Layah and her sister both sang on. Jane's father is a big Beach Boys fan, so these sunny California sounds were another early influence. "The harmonies just sort of seeped into me," she laughs.

Dance parties at the Jane household were also the norm. "There are some very funny home videos of me in diapers bopping around the living room," adds the songstress.

A second family home in the woods, on Knowlton Lake just outside of Kingston, ON, also shaped her muse. She spent most of her summers there as a child; it's where she still retreats to escape the noise of the city.

"I hear my muse more loudly when I am unplugged," Jane says. "I find being somewhere that is physically beautiful makes me want to create."

Always filled with creativity, Jane says she was 12 years old when she penned her first song, a little ditty about everyone's favourite ocean mammal.

"I had been taking piano lessons for six years and was getting tired of playing classical music," she recalls. "I wanted to accompany myself, so one day I reached the point where I was technically able to improvise and I wrote a save-the-dolphins song."

Following the success of her last disc, and surviving a health scare (Jane was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes prior to *Honey*'s release), the songwriter has a new lease on life.

"Honey, for me, is a metaphor for taking all the sweetness life offers and at the same time honey has become a substance that can save my life," she concludes. "I feel like I've let go of the music a bit and it doesn't need to be everything anymore."

- By David McPherson

Jim McLennan

s we all know by now, multi-tasking and the necessity to switch careers is reality. That said, few of us accomplish the rabbit trick(s) with real distinction, and fewer still are able to return to roots. Jim McLennan is one of those cheerful exceptions.

Raised in Edmonton, AB, McLennan reached his crossroads (decidedly non-Robert Johnson-style, for this practising Baptist) at about age 12, when his parents offered him either a three-speed bike or a Stella guitar for a birthday present.

"There was just no question," chuckles McLennan on a frosty February morning on the line from his log home near Longview in the Alberta foothills west of Calgary. "I went with the six-string and that was it."

A fondness for the music of Gordon Lightfoot—most especially, for the stellar, uber-clean finger picking of Lightfoot sideman Red Shea—fired an extended learning curve on the instrument, aided by lessons and sheer sweat equity.

Fast-forward to the '70s and young Jim found himself in the midst of an acoustic guitar renaissance, recording for the likes of American six-string wizard Stefan Grossman's prestigious Kicking Horse Records. To this day, McLennan's guitar transcriptions/arrangements—not to men-



- The Big Buzz =

tion performances—of Scott Joplin rags back then remain little short of remarkable. Features in serious periodicals such as *Guitar Player*, concerts, producing/arranging stints—the heights and vagaries of the working musician—unfolded.

At the same time, a parallel universe was in play. A lifelong interest in fly-fishing, shared by wife Lynda, got serious to the point of the couple making a move to Calgary and the lower Bow River to open a business. A shop and guiding service were hatched to considerable success. Indeed, the two are by now acknowledged stars in the split-cane cosmos, with books, personal appearances, videos, TV outings and, lately, teaching—the focus today—to their credit.

It was the very success of the fly-fishing ventures, along with a 1988 hunting accident that took off several fingertips of his left hand, that precipitated what amounted to a two-decade sabbatical from professional music. Gradually, the chops and the interest returned, by any measure a heartening story of determination and (pardon) pluck.

And as it turns out, that's good news for listeners of quality music. In addition to a growing list of gigs in a variety of settings—including some with vocalist Lynda, an accomplished musician in her own right—an impressive new CD of instrumentals has arrived.

Six-String Gumbo (www.mclennan-flyfishing.com) is a canny collection of diverse work, stretching from Dvorak to Joplin to Billy Joel to Jerry Reid—along with original tunes—that showcase the

player's alchemy in transforming solo guitar to a near-orchestral realm. Hackneyed "one-man band" clichés just don't cover this kind of mature artistry.

The guy with the Martin D-18 on his lap says the recording (done at musician/engineer Joe Cunningham's place in Pincher Creek) was somewhat inspired by a heart attack four years ago, another hurdle successfully navigated.

"Well, it makes you think. It wasn't so much a morbid thing, but Lynda suggested getting something down for our daughter wouldn't be a bad idea. And it was a pleasure to do, really, so relaxed with Joe, no rushing, no timetable."

Aspirations? "Well, I hope the guitar crowd who knew me from my first incarnation will like it but also that others will find it interesting, too. Of course, no one will ever tell you they hate it. So far, some have said they like to listen over dinner, or find it soothing when driving. I'm fine with that."

You will be, too—and as in the playing, the more attention you pay, the better it gets. Getting back to where you once belonged can be a beautiful thing.

- By Alan Kellogg

The Forgotten Bouzouki

In 1978, George Miminis moved to Canada from Greece to pursue graduate studies in computer science at McGill University. On the verge of finishing his PhD in 1983, he had already received many excellent job offers when an ad for a position in the computer science department at Memorial University of Newfoundland caught his eye.

"The university said they would pay my ticket to Newfoundland for my interview, and I thought I should come, because I might not get there again. I came and fell in love with the place and the people. Moving here was one of the best decisions of my life."

The following year, George and his wife, Zetta, moved to St. John's. They worked, had children, and enjoyed music in their leisure time. George played the guitar and was an avid singer of Greek songs. In 1986, for his thirty-third birthday, Zetta gave George a Greek bouzouki. He never played it, and it languished in their basement for several years.

In 1995, Zetta passed away suddenly. After her death, George began playing music with other members of the Greek community for fun and company. He found the neglected bouzouki in his basement, dusted it off and brought it upstairs, where it became a focal point of his musical gatherings. His group called itself The Forgotten Bouzouki, and Zetta's gift to George eventually led to years of musical exploration and collaboration with Newfoundland musicians, culminating in the release of the group's first CD in the autumn of 2011.

After a few performances at Greek community events, most of George's friends eventually drifted away from the group, but George decided to take the band to the next level and began recruiting professional musicians, mentoring them in the performance of Greek folk music.

Former Figgy Duff singer Pamela Mor-



— The Big Buzz =



gan and accordion player Graham Wells were amongst the early members of the group's second incarnation. The current lineup consists of George Miminis (lead vocals and guitar), Holly Hogan (vocals), Heather Wright (violin, flute and viola), Darren Browne (six-string Greek bouzouki, baglamas and mandolin), Matt Hender (double bass), Alison Corbett (baglamas and violin), George's son Simon Miminis (percussion), and the ever-versatile Dave Panting of Rawlins Cross (eight-string Greek bouzouki, mandolin, baglamas, tzouras and lute).

The band's self-titled CD contains many types of Greek folk songs, including island songs, traditional songs, and rebetiko.

Often compared to American blues or Portuguese fado, rebetiko is the music of the down and out and the down to earth; its lyrical themes explore diverse, everyday matters such as drinking, drugs, prison, war, love, infidelity and isolation.

So how does it feel to be playing Greek music with a crowd of Newfoundlanders? "When it comes to Greek music, you don't have to be Greek to play it," says George, "but it is important to have good musicians who love the music. I guess I sort of supervised their learning, but without knowing what to tell them. I would just say to them, 'that sounds good', or 'that's not so great', or 'try to do this', but I couldn't tell them how. Honestly, now, when I hear them play, I can't tell the difference between them and Greek musicians. They sound great."

- By Jean Hewson

Katya Chorover

atya Chorover has a perfect voice for country music, a warm, soulful alto that seems to tremble with unexpressed emotion. Even when she's singing a happy song, there's a trace of sorrow in her delivery, the sound of a teardrop caught in the back of her throat. It's the sound all great country singers have.

"I grew up on a steady diet of folk music," Chorover says from her home in the mountains of Colorado. "My parents listened to Dylan, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Woody Guthrie and The Weavers. When I started writing, I felt a need to respond to the political situation through music. After living in Colorado for a while, I realized I love country music. It's what comes out of me organically when I write. I used to call my music twang-folk but a friend said it sounds like folky-tonk."

Chorover grew up in Boston but finished her schooling at Evergreen State College in Washington, where she was part of the alternative Northwest folk scene that eventually gave birth to Laura Veirs and The Decemberists.

"Lots of great music was happening," Chorover recalls. "I had no consciousness that we were building a 'scene.' I was around other creative people who wanted to bust out of normal forms and write challenging songs.

"I wrote my first song before I could play guitar. I took it to a friend, sang it for him and he sketched out the chords I needed to play it. After that, I was obsessed with songwriting and playing." People responded favourably to her expressive vocals and open-hearted songs, but she didn't know how to record them. "My friend Casey Neill said he'd make an album for me, then we could go on the road together."

She, however, produced her first album, *How This Feels*. Chorover spent the next few years selling it at shows and touring the U.S. and Europe. She followed up with *The Clearing* (1998) and *Off The Map* (2001). Both got rave reviews and increased her following but, in 2006, she moved to Colorado with her husband and daughter.

"I stopped working at music and focused on being a mom but it pushed back to the surface. Writing is harder when you're not surrounded by other musicians but I couldn't have written the songs on *Big Big Love* anywhere else. The sky and land here became part of the music I write."

Chorover started performing locally and sent Neill some of the new tunes.

"After he heard them, he insisted on producing an album. I flew to Portland and made the album in a week, tracking most of it live. It was crazy and cathartic; the most fun I've ever had playing music."

The creative frenzy shows. The band on *Big Big Love* crackles and Chorover's vocals wrap around you like a favourite blanket on a cold night. *Whiskey Clouds*, *Little Bird* and *Obsession* are guitar heavy folky-tonk tunes, while quieter numbers like *Satisfied Life* and the gorgeous *Brand New Day* show off Chorover's soulful side.

"I have a loose, emotion-based approach from singing lots of jazz standards as a kid. I'd been playing these songs for years in isolation, so getting into the studio and recording with the cats Casey put together was amazing."

- By J. Poet



Minor Empire

rowing up in Turkey, Ozan Boz learned to love the varied music of his homeland thanks to his father, who moved the family frequently. Looking back, he now realizes this gave him an edge when it comes to music since he was exposed to many different traditions.

"Throughout its history, many civilizations came and went," explains the founding member of Minor Empire. "It is called 'crossroads of civilizations' for a reason ... they have all left their marks. You feel it in your everyday life, from food to music, and people are aware of this massive heritage.

"Music in Turkey today has the same styles as the rest of the world such as pop, rock, rap, alternative," he adds. "As well, it has its own styles such as Turkish folk, Turkish classical and also hybrid styles like Anatolian rock, which is kind of a modern day folk music with a rock attitude."

Boz was also lucky to get introduced to Western music by his older brother, who studied at a boarding school in a big city and returned home at the end of each semester with a pile of vinyl.

"I'd go straight to his bag and wait for him to open it and he'd tease me by taking out only a few records a day," he recalls. "But then we'd listen to them together and he'd tell me stories about the bands he knew. Best of all, he'd leave those records for me when he left home for his next semester. Those were some of the most fun musical memories."



While he listens to fusion music, and admires many bands in this field, Boz insists Second Nature—the band's debut—is not a fusion album. "I don't think in terms of genres," he explains. "I put together the elements of music I like most and make sure to achieve urgency and intensity."

So, how does Boz describe the end result of the *Second Nature* music-making sessions?

"The traditional components of the music on this record are really true to their traditions," he says. "They didn't change their original shapes or attitude. For instance, if you listen to the clarinet solo on *Divane Asik Gibi*, that's exactly how Selim Sesler would play a solo in a traditional setting. He is not restricted to a limited number of bars, or to hit certain notes, or to play a melody that is not traditional.

"The same goes for electric guitars," he adds. "They don't try to fit into a traditional setting; they are funky when they feel like it ... they are simply what they are, and they co-exist effortlessly."

Second Nature was recorded mainly at Boz's home studio in High Park, Toronto, while other tracks were laid down in places farther afield, such as Montreal and Istanbul. It was a collaborative effort featuring a hand-picked group of musicians he admires, including longtime friend Michael Occhipinti.

"It is a dream team," he says of a group of players that includes long-time friend Michael Occhipinti. "Working and performing with them gives me the thrill of skydiving with the safety of an airplane."

- By David McPherson

Win Gillian Welch's The Harrow And The Harvest



Gillian Welch's *The Harrow & The Harvest* handily won *Penguin Eggs* Album of the Year, beating out some stiff competition from the likes of The Decemberists and Laura Marling. And the nice people at Acony Records have very kindly provided us with six copies. To win one, answer

the following questions correctly and e-mail them to penguineggs@shaw.ca. Put Gillian Welch Contest as the subject. Please include a mailing address and a proper contact name in order for us to forward your disc. Failure to do so will result in disqualification. Good luck.

Q. At what school did Gillian Welch and David Rawlings first meet?

Q. For what project did Gillian Welch win a Grammy?

Q. Who produced Gillian's first album, Revival?

Answers to The Once's Row Upon Row of the People They Know contest are: Q1: Rising Tide Theatre Company, Q2: Corner Brook, Burin, Coley's Point, Q3: Leonard Cohen. And the winners are: Brian FitzGerald, Cochrane, AB: David Mouland, Edmonton. AB; Pat Battles, Victoria, BC; Stephen Lewis, Bellingham, WA; Lorna Osbourne, Maple Ridge, BC; Francis Devlin, Edmonton, AB,

ALBUNIS OF THE YEAR

CHITTES FAVOURITE NEW DISCOVERIES OF 2011



Albums of the Year for 2011

1. Gillian Welch

The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

2. The Deep Dark Woods

The Place I LeftBehind (Six Shooter Records)

The Once

 $Row\ Upon\ Row\ of\ the\ People\ They\ Know\ ({\tt Borealis})$

June Tabor & Oysterband

Ragged Kingdom (Topic)

5. Laura Marling

A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon Music)

6. Blackie & The Rodeo Kings

Kings & Queens (File Under: Music)

Ry Cooder

Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down (Nonesuch)

The Decemberists

The King Is Dead (Capitol)

David Francey

Late Edition (Laker Music)

Harry Manx & Kevin Breit

Strictly Whatever (Stony Plain)

New Discoveries of 2011

1. The Barr Brothers
Carrie Elkin
Pokey LaFarge
New Country Rehab

her first album since 2003, Gillian Welch has created a dark, raw, dramatic slice of Americana. It's a comeback album of sorts after the disappointing, largely band-backed, *Soul Journey*. While clearly steeped in the folk tradition, the lyrics are tight, contemporary, contemplative and fatalistic. She's accompanied, as always, by David Rawlings on guitar and banjo. And that's it. More a duet album, really, and a worthy winner of our 11th annual poll. Clearly it struck a note with our critics as she won by a landslide.

Almost 50 music journalists, radio hosts, artistic directors of clubs and festivals, and various individuals with an acute knowledge of folk, roots and world music in Canada added their credibility to this poll.

This year's results justifiably reflect strong Canadian content and yet no world music made our Top 10. I have my suspicions why. *Penguin Eggs* receives very, very few promotional copies of the wonderful releases that circulate around Europe. I have to assume that's also the case with other media outlets around the country, thus little or no national exposure for international world music. How sad.

On a more cheerful note, though, our critics' Favourite New Discovery of 2011 turned into the usual bun fight. No less than four acts—The Barr Brothers, Carrie Elkin, Pokey La Farge and New Country Rehab—shared top honours and are split evenly between two Canadian and two American acts.

As in years past, we asked participants to list their favourite 10 recordings released in 2011. Every nomination, listed alphabetically, received one point. The winner gathered the most. For the New Discoveries category, we asked for three nominations. A huge thanks, then, to all who kindly participated. And a hearty congratulations to our winners. In the following pages, you can see how our judges voted. Now go out and discover how wonderful these acts are live.

- Roddy Campbell



Past Album of the Year Winners

2010: Lynn Miles, Fall For Beauty (True North Records)

2009: Jory Nash, New Blue Day (Independent)

2008: Fred Eaglesmith, Tinderbox (A Major Label)

2007: Alison Krauss & Robert Plant,
Raising Sand (Regunder)

2006: Bob Dylan, Modern Times (Columbia)

2005: Lynn Miles, Love Sweet Love (True North)

2004: David Francey, The Waking Hour (Laker Music)

2003: David Francey, Skating Rink (Laker Music)

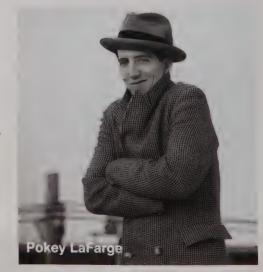
2002: Harry Manx, Wise And Otherwise (Northern Bluest)

2001: David Francey, Far End of Summer (Laker Music)

Past New Discovery Winners

210: The Once 2009: Kate Reid

2008: Amelia Curran



ALBUMS OF THE YEAR



2007: Little Miss Higgins, Seth Lakeman, Catherine MacLellan

2006: Crooked Still

2005: Ridley Bent and House of Doc

2004: Fiamma Fumana

2003: Rae Spoon

2002: Ruthie Foster and Kathleen Edwards

2001: Harry Manx

Honorable Mentions

Murray McLauchlan, *Human Writes* (True North) Ryan Adams, *Ashes and Fire* (Capital); Paul Simon, So Beautiful Or So What (Hear Music)

Lorna Arndt: Manager, Folkways Alive! University of Alberta in partnership with Smithsonian Folkways Recordings: ¡Cimarrón!, ¡Cimarrón! Joropo Music from the Plains of Colombia (Smithsonian Folkways); Mary Fahl, From the Dark Side of the Moon (V2 Records); David Francey, Late Edition (Laker Music); John Jackson, Takin' My Own Sweet Time (Humble Records); Danny Knicely, The Melody Lingers On (Independent); Krüger Brothers, Appalachian Concerto (2011 Double Time Music); Pokey LaFarge & The South City Three, Middle of Everywhere (2011 Free Dirt Records); Madison Violet, The Good in Goodbye (True North); Elizabeth Mitchell, You Are My Little Bird (Smithsonian Folkways); Chip Taylor & The Grandkids, Golden Kids Rules (Smithsonian Folkways)

New Discoveries: Diane Birch, Tommy Emmanuel, The Harris Brothers

Yves Bernard: Reporter, Le Devoir, host at CIBL-Radio-Montréal: Kiran Ahluwalia, Aam Zameen

- Common Ground (Avokado Artist); Azam Ali, De
la nuit au lever du jour (Cross Current Music; Irem
Bekter Quintet, Primero (Malasartes); Geoff Berner,
Victory Party (Mint Records); Stéphanie Gagnon, Paul
Marchand & Martin Racine, L'hirondelle (Independent); Genticorum, Nagez rameurs (Roues et Archets);
Juan Sebastian Larobina, Somos (La pruche libre);

Mighty Popo, *Gakondo* (Borealis Records); Sultans of String, *Move* (Independent); Wesli, *Liberté dans le noir* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Arométis, D'Harmo, Saltarello

Allison Brock: Radio host, Widecut Country, CKUA Radio; programmer, Americana & Roots channels for Stingray Digital in U.S. and CBC; review contributor for Canadian Cowboy Country magazine: Matraca Berg, The Dreaming Fields (Dualtone); Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, Kings & Queens (File Under: Music); Bill Bourne & The Free Radio Dance Band, Bluesland (Linus); Hayes Carll, KMAG YOYO (Lost Highway); The Civil Wars, Barton Hollow (Universal Music Canada); Fearing & White, Fearing & White (Lowden); Proud Emmylou Harris, Hard Bargain (Nonesuch); Robyn Ludwick, Out of These Blues (Late Show); Gurf Morlix, Blaze Foley's 113th Wet Dream (Rootball); Zoe Muth & The Lost High Rollers, Starlight Motel (Signature Sounds)

New Discoveries: Civil Wars, Carrie Elkin, Robyn Ludwick

Roddy Campbell: Editor and publisher, Penguin
Eggs: The Barr Brothers, The Barr Brothers (Secret
City Records); The Decemberists, The King Is Dead
(Capitol); The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left
Behind (Six Shooter Records); The Jolly Boys, Great
Expectations (GeeJam); Laura Marling, A Creature I
Don't Know (Ribbon Music); Brian Miller, Minnesota
Lumberjack Songs (Two Tap Records); Hedy West, Ballads and Songs from the Appalachians (Fellside); Daniel
Romano, Sleep Beneath the Willow (You've Changed
Records); Ron Sexsmith, Long Player, Late Bloomer
(Warner Bros); June Tabor & The Oysterband, Ragged
Kinedom (Topic)

New Discoveries: Matt Andersen, Pokey LaFarge, The Punch Brothers

Charlie Cares: Music retailer (Ground Floor Music, Guelph, ON): Michael Jerome Brown, *The Road Is*

Dark (Borealis); The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left Behind (Six Shooter); The Jolly Boys, Great Expectation (Entertainment One); Pierre Lapointe, Seul au piano (Audiogram); Tyler Ramsey, The Valley Wind (Fat Possum); Jake Shimabukuro, Peace Love Ukulele (Hitchhike); Paul Simon, So Beautiful or So What (Hear); Ballake Sissoko & Vincent Segal, Chamber Music (Six Degrees); Ben Waters, Boogie 4 Stu: A Tribute to Ian Stewart (Eagle); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: Big Harp, Vincent Segal, Bry Webb

Lark Clark: Host, CKUA Radio: Kiran Ahluwalia, Aam Zameen – Common Ground (Avokado Artist Rec.); Aurelio, Laru Beya (Stonetree/SubPop); Blick Bassy, Hongo Calling (World Connection); Sidiki Camara Band, Tolerance (Parallel); Ravid Kahalani & Yemen Blues, Yemen Blues (Lev Group Media); Souad Massi, O Houria (Indie Europe/Zoom); Mighty Popo, Gakondo (Tamba Music); Paul Simon, So Beautiful or So What (Hear Music); Ballake Sissoko & Vincent Segal, Chamber Music (Six Degrees Music); Oliver Swain, In a Big Machine (Independent)

New Discoveries: Rita Indiana, Ballake Sissoko & Vincent Segal, the movie Benda Bilili

François Côté: Artistic director, Deep Roots Music Festival (2005-09): Mark Berube & The Patriotic Few, June in Siberia (Aquarius); Guy Clark, Songs and Stories (Dualtone); Bruce Cockburn, Small Source of Comfort (True North); Steve Earle, I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive (New West Records); Fleet Foxes, Helplessness Blues (Sub Pop); Sarah Jarosz, Follow Me Down (Sugar Hill); Yo Yo Ma, Chris Thile, Edgar Meyer, Stuart Duncan, Goat Rodeo Sessions (Sony Music); Dan Mangan, Oh Fortune (Arts and Crafts); Laura Marling, A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon Music); Tom Russell, Mesabi (Shout Factory)

New Discoveries: Laura Marling, Laura Marling, Laura Marling

Doug Cox: Musician, producer of the Vancouver



ALBUWS OF THE YEAR



Island MusicFest: Kiran Ahluwalia, Aam Zameen

– Common Ground (Sony Music); Steven Bernstein's

Millennial Territory Orchestra, MTO Plays Sly (Royal

Potato Family); Jackson Browne & David Lindley, Love

Is Strange (Inside Recordings); Bruce Cockburn, Small

Source of Comfort (True North); Ry Cooder, Pull Up

Some Dust and Sit Down (Nonesuch); Bill Frisell, All

We Are Saying (Savoy Jazz); Charlie Haden & Hank

Jones, Come Sunday (EmArcy); Bob Livingston, Gypsy

Alibi (New Wilderness); Paul Simon, So Beautiful Or

So What (Hear Music); J.D. Souther, Natural History

(Ent. One Music)

New Discoveries: Sam Baker, Prakash Sontakke, Radka Toneff

Fom Coxworth: Producer, CKUA's Folk Routes:
The Breakmen, Heartwood (Independent); Alela Diane,
Wild Divine (Rough Trade); Abbie Gardner, Hope
(Independent); Martyn Joseph, Under Lemonade Skies
(Pipe Records); Sarah MacDougall, The Greatest Ones
Alive (Independent); Murray McLauchlan, Human
Writes (True North); Ron Sexsmith, Long Player, Late
Boomer (Warner Bros.); Martin Simpson, Purpose +

THE DEAP

Grace (Topic); June Tabor & The Oysterband, Ragged Kingdom (Topic); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: The Breakmen, First Aid Kit, Sarah MacDougall

Ian Davies: Artistic director, Cuckoo's Nest Folk
Club & Acoustic Muse Concerts, London, ON: Antler
River Project, Latitude 43 (Independent); Aurelio, Laru
Beya (Sub Pop/Stonetree); Genticorum, Nagez Rameurs
(Roue et Archets); Nick Lowe, The Old Magic (Yep
Roc); Imelda May, More Mayhem (Decca); Paul McKenna Band, Stem the Tide (Mad River); The Once, Row
Upon Row of the People They Know (Borealis); June
Tabor & The Oysterband, Ragged Kingdom (Topic);
The Wailin' Jennys, Bright Morning Stars (True North);
Abigail Washburn, City of Refuge (Rounder)

New Discoveries: Brother Sun, Comas, Joe Crookston

Greg Davis: Owner, Soundscapes, Toronto, ON:
Balanescu Quartet, This Is the Balanescu Quartet
(Mute); The Bats, Free All the Monsters (Flying Nun);
Derek & The Dominos, Layla and Other Assorted Love
Songs (Deluxe Edition Reissue) (Universal); David
Kilgour, Left By Soft (Merge); Robert Scott, Ends
Run Together (Flying Nun); Various artists, The Fame
Studios Story 1961-1973 (Kent); Various artists, Sweet
Inspiration: The Songs of Dan Penn & Spooner Oldham
(Ace); Washed Out, Within and Without (Sub Pop);
Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony); A
Winged Victory for the Sullen, A Winged Victory for the
Sullen (Kranky)

New Discoveries: Berlioz, Gabriel Faure, Carol Kleyn

Andy Donnelly: Host, The Celtic Show, www.ckua.com: Sandy Brechin, Sunday Night Sessions at the

Ensign Ewart Pub (Brechin All Records); Andrew Calhoun, Grapevine (Waterbug Records); Kyle Carey, Monongah (Independent); King Creosote & Jon Hopkins, Diamond Mine (Domino Records); John Doyle, Shadow and Light (Compass Records); Kila, Gambler's Ballet (Kila Records); Jackie Leven & Michael Cosgrave, Wayside Shrines and the Code of the Travelling Man (Cooking Vynl); The Navigators, Soldiers and Sailors (Columbia/Sony Music); June Tabor & The Oysterband, Ragged Kingdom (Running Man); The Waterboys, An Appointment with Mr. Yeats (Proper Records)

New Discoveries: T Buckley, Kyle Carey, King Creosote and Jon Hopkins

Steve Edge: Artistic director, Rogue Folk Club,
Vancouver, BC, and host/producer of *The Edge On Folk*, CiTR FM 101.9, www.citr.ca: Dave Alvin, *Eleven Eleven* (Yep Roc Records); La Bottine Souriante, *Appellation d'Origine Controlee* (Borealis Records); The Deep Dark Woods, *The Place I Left Behind* (Six Shooter Records); Fatoumata Diawara, *Fatou* (World Circuit); The Once, *Row Upon Row of the People They Know* (Borealis); Pharis & Jason Romero, *A Passing Glimpse* (Independent); Tom Russell, *Mesabi* (Shout Factory); Snakefarm, *My Halo At Half Light* (Fledgling Records); June Tabor & The Oysterband, *Ragged Kingdom* (Topic Records); Gillian Welch, *The Harrow & the Harvest* (Acony)

New Discoveries: Qristina & Quinn Bachand, Pokey Lafarge & the South City Three, Imelda May

Barry Hammond: Reviewer, Penguin Eggs: Ryan Adams, Ashes & Fire (Paxamericana); Frazey Ford, Obadiah (Nettwerk); k.d. lang and the Siss Boom Bang, Sing It Loud (Nonesuch); Harry Manx & Kevin Breit, Strictly Whatever (Stony Plain); Old '97s, The Grand Theatre Vol. 2 (New West); Bruce Peninsula, Open Flames (Hand Drawn Dracula); J.D. Souther, Natural History (Ent. One Music); Tom Waits, Bad As Me (Anti-); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony); Lucinda Williams, Blessed (Lost Highway).



New Discoveries: Sarah Jarosz, The Secret Sisters, Denise Withnell

Phil Harries: Penguin Eggs contributor: The Barr Brothers, The Barr Brothers (Secret Society); Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, Kings and Queens (File Under: Music); Hayes Carll, KMAG YOYO (and Other American Stories) (Lost Highway); The Decemberists, The King Is Dead (Capitol); The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left Behind (Six Shooter); Fleet Foxes, Helplessness Blues (Sub Pop); The Jolly Boys, Great Expectations (GeeJam); Laura Marling, A Creature I Don't Know (Domino); The Once, The Once (Borealis); Tinariwen, Tassili (Anti-)

New Discoveries: The Civil Wars, Kev Corbett, The Head and the Heart

Mike Hill: Artistic director, Mariposa Folk Festival: The Civil Wars, Barton Hollow (Universal Music Canada); The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left Behind (Six Shooter); Fleet Foxes, Helplessness Blues (Sub Pop); The Good Lovelies, Let the Rain Fall (Independent); Reid Jamieson, Staring Contest (Independent); Murray McLauchlan, Human Rights (True North); David Myles, Live at the Carleton (Little Tiny Records); Lynn Myles, Fall For Beauty (True North); Josh Ritter, Live at the Iveagh Gardens (Pytheas); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: De Temps Antan, Carrie Elkin, Corbin Murdoch and the Nautical Miles

Steve Hussey: Guitarist, music retailer, Fred's Records, St. John's, NL: Greg Allman, Low Country Blues (Rounder); Michael Jerome Browne, The Road Is Dark (Borealis); Ry Cooder, Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down (Nonesuch); The Dardanelles, Eastern Light (Independent); David Francey, Late Edition (Laker); Booker T. Jones, Road from Memphis (Anti-); The Once, Row Upon Row of the People We Know (Borealis); Vieux Farka Toure, Secret (Six Degrees); Jimmie Vaughan, Plays More Blues, Ballada & Favourites (Shout Factory); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the



Harvest (Aconv)

New Discoveries: Gary Clark Jr., The Secret Sisters, Kenny Vaughan

Patrick Langston: Arts writer, Ottawa Citizen, music writer, Penguin Eggs: The Barr Brothers, The Barr Brothers (Secret City); Ry Cooder, Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down (Nonesuch); The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left Behind (Six Shooter); David Francey, Late Edition (Laker); Nick Lowe, The Old Magic (Yep Roc); Murray McLauchlan, Human Writes (True North); The Once, Row Upon Row of the People They Know (Borealis); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony); Wilco, The Whole Love (Anti-); Lucinda Williams, Blessed (Lost Highway)

New Discoveries: The Barr Brothers, The Deep Dark Woods, Lindi Ortega

Gregg Lawless: Canadian singer/songwriter/guitarist/
producer: Matthew Barber, Matthew Barber (Outside);
Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, Kings and Queens (File
Under: Music); Jeff Beck, Rock'n'Roll Party: Honoring Les Paul (Atco); Booker T. Jones, The Road from
Memphis (Anti-); Alison Krauss & Union Station,
Paper Airplane (Rounder); Harry Manx & Kevin
Breit, Strictly Whatever (Stony Plain); Lynn Miles,
Fall for Beauty (High Romance); David Myles, Into
the Sun (Little Tiny); Ron Sexsmith, Long Player, Late
Bloomer (Warner Music Canada); Teddy Thompson,
Bella (Verve Forecast)

New Discoveries: Shawna Caspi, First Rate People, Jacob Moon

Roger Levesque: Freelance music writer, Penguin Eggs, Edmonton Journal: Kiran Ahluwalia, Aam Zameen-Common Ground (Kiran Music); Michael Jerome Browne, The Road Is Dark (Borealis); David Francey, Late Edition (Laker Music); Hanggai, He Who Travels Far (4Q/World Connection); David Myles, Into The Sun (LittleTiny Records); Ballake Sissoko & Vincent Segal, Chamber Music (No Format); June Tabor & The Oysterband, Ragged Kingdom (Topic); Tinariwen, Tassili (Anti-); Jimmy Vaughan, Plays More Blues,



ALBUNIS OF THE YEAR

Ballads & Favourites (Shout Factory); Tom Waits, Bad
As Me (Anti-)

New Discoveries: Etran Finatawa, Aurelio Martinez, Imelda May

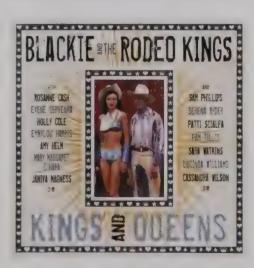
Scott Lingley: Freelance music writer: Aurelio, Laru Beya (Sup Pop); The AwesomeHots, The AwesomeHots (Independent); The Decemberists, The King Is Dead (Capitol); Matt Epp and the Amorian Assembly, At Dawn (Independent); The Head and the Heart, The Head and the Heart (Sub Pop); Iron and Wine, Kiss Each Other Clean (Warner); Seun Kuti and the Egypt 80, From Africa with Fury: Rise (Sony); Dan Mangan, Oh Fortune (Arts & Crafts); Raphael Saadiq, Stone Rollin' (Sony); Tinariwen, Tassili (Nonesuch)

New Discoveries: Imaginary Cities, Kayo Dot, Man's Gin

Arthur McGregor: Director, Ottawa Folklore Centre Ltd.: Qristina & Quinn Bachand, Family (Independent); La Bottine Souriante, Appelation d'origine controlée (Borealis); Michael Jerome Browne, The Road Is Dark (Borealis); Missy Burgess, Play Me Sweet (Independent); The Once, Row Upon Row of the People They Know (Borealis); Stan Rogers, Fogarty's Cove (ReMastered), (Borealis); Oliver Schroer & Nuala Kennedy, Enthralled (Borealis); The Sweet Lowdown, The Sweet Lowdown (Independent); Suzie Vinnick, Me 'n' Mabel (Independent); Sneezy Waters, Sneezy Waters (Eating Crow Records)

New Discoveries: Eilis Kennedy, Jayme Stone, Chris Thile

David McPherson: Freelance music writer, contributor to Penguin Eggs, Words & Music: The Black Keys, El Camino (Nonesuch); Richard Buckner, Our Blood (Merge Records); Hayes Carll, KMAGYOYO (Lost Highway); The Civil Wars, Barton Hollow (Tone Tree Music); The Decemberists, The King is Dead (Capitol); The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left Behind (Six Shooter); The Jayhawks, Mockingbird Time (Rounder); The Old 97s, The Grand Theatre Vol. 2 (New West),



ALBUNS OF THE YEAR

Paul Simon, So Beautiful or So What (Hear Music); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: Sarah MacDougall, Mumford & Sons, Du Temps Antan

Monica Miller: Host/producer, How I Hear It,
CKUA Radio Network: Kathryn Calder, Bright and
Vivid (File Under: Music); The Decemberists, The King
Is Dead (Capitol); Feist, Metals (Arts & Crafts); Fleet
Foxes, Helplessness Blues (Sub Pop); Harry Manx &
Kevin Breit, Strictly Whatever (Stony Plain); Laura
Marling, A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon Music);
Aline Morales, Flores Amores e Tambores (Independent): Paul Simon, So Beautiful Or So What (Hear
Music); Jeff Stuart and the Hearts, Equal Parts Reason
and Moonlight (Rawlco); Various artists, Red Hot + Rio

New Discoveries: Fitz and the Tantrums, Aline Iorales, New Country Rehab

Tony Montague: Music journalist, Georgia Strait, Moots, Penguin Eggs: Dave Alvin, Eleven Eleven (Yep Roc); Aurelio, Laru Beya (Stonetree); Belzébuth, Suite 8 (Independent); Ray Bonneville, Bad Man's Blood (Red House); La Bottine Souriante, Appelation d'origine controlée (Borealis); John Doyle, Shadow and Light (Compass); The Foghorn Trio, Le Sud de la Louisiane (Independent); Martin Simpson, Purpose and Grace (Topic); Mike Stevens and Matt Andersen, Push Record: The Banff Sessions (Borealis); June Tabor & The Oysterband, Ragged Kingdom (Topic)

New Discoveries: Janusz Prusinowski Trio, Pokey LaFarge, António Zambujo

Tom Murray: Music writer, Edmonton Journal:
Matt Andersen, Coalmining Blues (Busted Flat); Geoff
Berner, Victory Party (Mint); Richard Buckner, Our
Blood (Merge); Bill Callahan, Apocalypse (Drag City);
Joe Ely, Satisfied at Last (Redeye); Werner Frey, Canadian, The Music of Canada (Independent); Mekons, Ancient and Modern (Bloodshot); Tom Waits, Bad As Me
(Anti-); Abigail Washburn, City of Refuse (Rounder):

ctent and Modern (Bloodshot); Tom Waits, Bad As Me
(Anti-); Abigail Washburn, City of Refuge (Rounder);

POLL UP SOME BUST AND SIT DOWN

Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: The Awesomehots, Werner Frey, No River

David Newland: Writer, editor, musician, host: David Essig, Rolling Fork to Gallows Point (Watershed); Fraser/Daley, Fraser/Daley (Independent); Madison Violet, The Good in Goodbye (True North); Murray McLauchlan, Human Writes (True North); New Country Rehab, New Country Rehab (Independent); Oh Susanna, Soon the Birds (Outside Music); The Once, Row Upon Row of the People They Know (Borealis); Kim Stockwood, Back to the Water (Turtlemusik); Sultans of String, Move (Independent); Suzie Vinnick, Me 'n' Mabel (Independent)

New Discoveries: Meaghan Blanchard, Leela Gilday, Kae Sun

Sue Panning: Artistic director, Canmore Folk Music Festival, Heritage Day long weekend: Del Barber, Love Songs for the Last 20 (Broken Ground); Ray Bonneville, Bad Man's Blood (Red House); Civil Wars, Barton Hallow (Sensibility Music); Dawes, Nothing is Wrong (ATO Records); David Francey, Late Edition (Laker Music); Locarno, Locarno (Jerico Beach Music); Laura Marling, A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon Music); Ben Sollee, Inclusions (Tin Ear); Whitehorse, Whitehorse (Six Shooter); William Elliot Whitmore, Field Song (Anti-)

New Discoveries: Elage Diouf, Ben Sollee, William Elliot Whitmore

Samantha Parton: singer/songwriter, The Be Good Tanyas: Ry Cooder, Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down (Nonesuch); Dawes, Nothing Is Wrong (Fontana North); The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left Behind (Six Shooter); Ana Egge, Bad Blood (Ammal); Emmylou Harris, Hard Bargain (Nonesuch); k.d. lang and The Siss Boom Bang, Sing It Loud (Nonesuch); Laura Marling, A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon Music); Oh Susanna, Soon the Birds (Outside Music); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony); Lucinda



Williams, Blessed (Universal/Island Def Jam)

New Discoveries: The Unthanks, Lucy Wainwright Roche, Marry Waterson & Oliver Knight

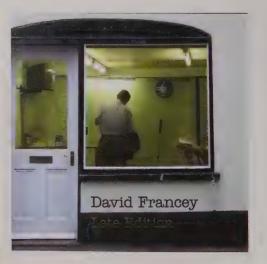
Holger Petersen: Host Saturday Night Blues, CBC Radio: Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, Kings and Queens (File Under: Music); Harry Manx & Kevin Breit, Strictly Whatever (Stony Plain); Wynton Marsalis & Eric Clapton, Wynton Marsalis & Eric Clapton Play the Blues - Live From Jazz At Lincoln Centre (Warner Bros); Ry Cooder, Pull Up Some Dust and Settle Down (Nonesuch); Nick Lowe, The Old Magic (Yep Roc); Maria Muldaur, Steady Love (Stony Plain); Monkey-Junk, To Behold (Stony Plain); Steve Pineo, Steve Pineo's Blue Monday Trio (Independent); Tedeschi Trucks Band, Revelator (Sony); Various Artists, This One's For Him: A Tribute to Guy Clark (Icehouse Music)

New Discoveries: Gary Clark Jr., Cash Box Kings, Ben Waters

Tom Power: Musician, broadcaster, host of Deep Roots, CBC Radio: Ryan Adams, Ashes & Fire (Paxamericana); Bon Iver, Bon Iver (Jagjaguwar); Michael Jerome Brown, The Road Is Dark (Borealis); De Danann, Wonder Waltz (RMG); Fleet Foxes, Helplessness Blues (Sub Pop); Laura Marling, A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon Music); Del McCoury Band, Old Memories: The Songs of Bill Monroe (McCoury Music/RED); Willie Nelson, Remember Me Vol. 1 (R&J Records); Weather Station, All of It Was Mine (You've Changed Records); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: n/s

John Prentice: Host/producer, Planet Mainstage, 101.5 UMFM, Winnipeg: Kiran Ahluwalia, Aam Zameen – Common Ground (Avokado Artist Rec.); Bombino, Agadez (Cumbancha); Steve Dawson, Nightshade (Black Hen Music); David Francey, Late Edition (Laker Music); Eliza Gilkyson, Roses at the End of Time (Red House); Catherine MacLellan, Silouette (True North);



ALBUNIS OF THE YEAR

Outside Track, *Curious Things Given Wings* (Lorimer Records); Rembetika Hipsters, *Kafeneion* (Socrates Pizza); Oliver Swain, *In a Big Machine* (Independent); Twilight Hotel, *When Wolves Go Blind* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Bombino, Outside Track, Oliver Swain

Steve Pritchard: Roots radio programmer, CIUT
Radio, Toronto, www.ciut.fm: Travers Chandler &
Avery County, State of Depression (Patuxent); Hot Club
of Cowtown, What Makes Bob Holler (Proper); Ray
Legere & Mike O'Reilly, Story Songs and Toe Tappin'
Tunes (Acoustic Horizon); John Reichman & The Jaybirds, Vintage and Unique (Corvus); Ivan Rosenberg
& The Foggy Hogtown Boys, The Hogtown Sessions
(Vole-O-Tone); Jayme Stone, Room of Wonders
(Independent); Kitgut Stringband, Rebel Raid (North
Possom); Chris Thile & Michael Daves, Sleep With
One Eye Open (Nonesuch); April Verch, That's How We
Run (Independent); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the
Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: Elizabeth LaPrelle, Slocan Rambers, Travers Chaldler & Avery County

Tim Readman: Musician, songwriter and Penguin Eggs contributor: Qristina & Quinn Bachand, Family, (Independent); Martin Carthy & Dave Swarbrick, Walnut Creek: Live Recordings 1989-1996 (Fellside Recordings); John Doyle, Shadow and Light, (Compass Records); Nuala Kennedy & Oliver Schroer, Enthralled (Borealis); A.L. Lloyd, Bramble Briars and Beams of the Sun – Traditional English Ballads (Fellside Recordings); Brian Miller, Minnesota Lumberjack Songs (Two Tap Records); Pilgrim's Way, Wayside Courtesies (Fellside Records); Kate Reid, Doing It for the Chicks (Independent); The Two Tap Trio, A Night at the Fair (Two Tap Records); Chris Ricketts, Port of Escape (Acoustic Fusion Records)

New Discoveries: Brian Miller, Jason and Pharis Romero, Calvin Vollrath

Mike Regenstreif: Music journalist (Sing Out!

STRICTLY WILL GAVER HARRY MANX & KEVIN BREIT

Magazine, Ottawa Jewish Bulletin, firb.blogspot.com, The Forward) and broadcaster: Bruce Cockburn, Small Source of Comfort (True North); Ry Cooder, Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down (Nonesuch); Carrie Elkin, Call It My Garden (Red House); Diana Jones, High Atmosphere (Proper American); The Klezmatics, Live at Town Hall (Klezmatics Discs); Kate & Anna McGarrigle, Tell My Sister (Nonesuch); Bruce Murdoch, Sometimes I Wonder Why the World (Independent); Stan Rogers, The Very Best of Stan Rogers/Fogarty's Cove (Borealis); Tom Russell, Mesabi (Shout! Factory); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: The Boxcar Boys, Carrie Elkin, The Sweet Lowdown

Jeff Robson: Host, Tell the Band To Go Home, www.tellthebandtogohome.com, CJUM 101.5 UMFM, Winnipeg: Matt Andersen, Coal Mining Blues (Busted Flat); Steven Bowers, Beothuk Words (Independent); The Damnwells, No One Listens to the Band Anymore (Pledge Music/Poor Man's Music); Steve Earle, I'll Never Get Out of this World Alive (New West); Ron Hawkins, Straightjacket Love (Independent); Middle Brother, Middle Brother (Partisan); Scott Nolan, Montgomery Eldorado (Transistor 66); Matthew Ryan, I Recall Standing As Though Nothing Could Fall (Dear Future Collective); The Warped 45s, Matador Sunset (Pheromone); Brock Zeman, Me Then You (Busted Flat)

New Discoveries: Deer Tick, Nikki Lane, Bobby

Long

Mike Sadava: Freelance journalist and musician:
Black Lilies, 100 Miles of Wreckage (Independent);
Scott Cook, Moonlit Rambles (Independent); Les Doigts de l'Homme, 1910 (Alma); Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer, et al, The Goat Rodeo Sessions (Sony Masterworks);
Harry Manx & Kevin Breit, Strictly Whatever (True North); Pharis & Jason Romero, A Passing Glimpse (Lula Records); Kate Rusby, Make the Light (Pure Records); Brian Setzer, Setzer Goes Instru-Mental (Surfdog Records); Esperanza Spalding, Chamber Music Society (Heads Up); Gillian Welch, The Harrow

& the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: Elephant Revival, Sarah Jarosz, Kruger Brothers

Jason Schneider: Assistant editor, Exclaim!; author of Whispering Pines: the Northern Roots of American Music from Hank Snow to The Band; co-author of Have Not Been the Same: the CanRock Renaissance 1985-95: Ryan Adams, Ashes & Fire (EMI); Elliott Brood, Days Into Years (Paper Bag); Glen Campbell, Ghost on the Canvas (Surfdog); Hayes Carll, Kmag Yoyo (Lost Highway); Cowboy Junkies, Demons (Latent); The Deep Dark Woods, The Place I Left Behind (Six Shooter); Feist, Metals (Arts & Crafts), The Jayhawks, Mocking-bird Time (Rounder); One Hundred Dollars, Songs of Man (Outside); Tom Waits, Bad As Me (Anti-)

New Discoveries: The Barr Brothers, Bradleyboy MacArthur, New Country Rehab

les siemieniuk: General manager, Calgary Folk
Music Festival: Ryan Adams, Ashes and Fire (Capital);
The Burning Hell, Flux Capacitor (Independent);
The Decemberists, The King Is Dead (Rough Trade);
100 Mile House, Hollow Ponds (Independent); Tom
Russell, Mesabi (Shout! Factory); Richard Seguin, Appalaches (Spectra); Kim Stockwood, Back to the Water (Turtlemusik); June Tabor & The Oysterband, Ragged
Kingdom (Topic Records); Frank Turner, England Keep
My Bones (Epitaph); William Elliott Whitmore, Field
Songs (Anti-)

New Discoveries: The Barr Brothers, The Head and the Heart, The Unthanks

Lyle Skinner: Host/producer, Prairie Ceilidh, CKJS
Radio 810, Winnipeg, MN: Qristina & Quinn Bachand,
Family (Q&Q Music); Battlefield Band, Line-Up
(Temple); Heather Dale, Fairytale (Amphis); John
Doyle, Shadow and Light (Compass); Bruce Guthro,
Celtic Crossing (Independent); The Paul McKenna
Band, Stem the Tide (Mad River); The Once, Row Upon
Row of the People They Know (Borealis); Ryan's Fancy,
What A Time! (Singsong); June Tabor & Oysterband,



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ALBUNIS OF THE YEAR

Ragged Kingdom (Topic); The Wailin' Jennys, Bright Morning Stars (True North)

New Discoveries: Caladh Nua, Cuan, Manran

Carolyn Sutherland: Artistic director Shelter Valley
Folk Festival: Del Barber, Love Songs For The Last
Twenty (Independent); Bon Iver, Bon Iver (Jagjaguwar);
Krishna Das, Heart as Wide as the World (Nettwerk);
Kim Dunn, Take This Hammer (Independent); Dave
Gunning, A tribute to John Allan Cameron (Wee House
of Music*Fontana North); Dan Mangan, Oh Fortune
(Six Shooter Records); The Deep Dark Woods, The
Place I Left Behind (Six Shooter Records); James Vincent McMorrow, Early in the Morning (Believe Digital); The Once, Row Upon Row Of The People We Know
(Borealis); Suzie Vinnick, Me 'n' Mabel (Independent)

New Discoveries: The Avett Brothers, Joe Bonamassa, Beth Hart

Brenda and Roman Tacik: Hosts, Regina's Mighty Shores, CJTR 91.3 FM, Regina, SK: Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, Kings and Queens (File Under: Music); Harry Manx & Kevin Breit, Strickly Whatever (Stony Plain); Murray McLauchlan, Human Writes (True North); The Once, Row Upon Row of the People They Know (Borealis); Tim Readman & Jennie Bice, Out of the Green (Big City); Kate Reid, Doing It for the Chicks (Self); Pharis & Jason Romero, A Passing Glimpse (Lula); June Tabor & The Oysterband, Ragged Kingdom (Topic); Suzie Vinnick, Me 'n' Mabel (Independent); Gillian Welch, The Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: Belle Plaine, New Country Rehab, The Sweet Lowdown

Eric Thom: Music writer: Isaac Allen, Don't Smoke (Horizon); Michelle Anthony, Tornadoes (Merclwyn); Danny Click, Life Is A Good Place (Dogstar); Ry Cooder, Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down (Nonesuch); David Essig, Rolling Back to Gallows Point (Watershed); Kat Goldman, Gypsy Girl (Independent); Harrison Kennedy, Shame the Devil (Electro-Fi); Layah Jane, Honey (Grace Note); Sanctified Grumblers, No Lie

(Independent); Tedeschi Trucks Band, *Revelator* (Sony Masterworks)

New Discoveries: The Hupman Brothers, Andrea Koziol, Greg Nagy

Richard Thornley: Reviewer, Penguin Eggs:
Aurelio, Laru Beya (Next Ambiance); Geoff Berner,
Victory Party (Mint); La Bottine Souriante, Appellation D'Origine Controlleé (Borealis); Seun Kuti, From
Africa with Fury: Rise (Sony); Little Axe, If You Want
Loyalty Buy A Dog (Real World); Locarno, Una Mas Y
Ya Nos Vamos (Jericho Beach); Owiny Sigoma Band,
Owiny Sigoma Band (Brownswood); Transglobal
Underground, The Stone Turntable (Mule Satellite);
The Waifs, Temptation (Compass); Gillian Welch, The
Harrow & the Harvest (Acony)

New Discoveries: Comas, Maz, Snakefarm

Jan Vanderhorst: Host, Just Us Folk, CKPC AM
1380, Brantford, ON: Blackie & The Rodeo Kings,
Kings and Queens (File Under:Music); David Francey,
Late Edition (Laker Music); Eliza Gilkyson, Roses at
the End of Time, (Red House); The Grascals, The Grascals and Friends (BluGrascal Records); Alison Krauss
& Union Station, Paper Airplane (Rounder); The Laws,
Try Love (Independent); Harry Manx & Kevin Breit,
Strictly Whatever (Stony Plain Records); Steve Martin,
Rare Bird Alert (Rounder Records); Suzie Vinnick, Me
'n' Mabel (Independent); The Wailin' Jennys, Bright
Morning Stars (True North)

New Discoveries: Del Barber, Cassie & Maggie MacDonald, The Once

Eric Volmers: Entertainment writer, Calgary Herald; freelancer, Penguin Eggs: Jill Barber, Mischievous Moon (Outside Music); Cowboy Junkies, Demons (Latent, Razor & Tie); Steve Earle, I'll Never Get Out of This Place Alive (New West); Jenn Grant, Honeymoon Punch (Six Shooter); Joe Henry, Reverie (Anti-); Jolie Holland, Pint of Blood (Anti-); k.d. lang & The Siss Boom Bang, Sing It Loud (Nonesuch); One Hundred Dollars, Songs of Man (Blue Fog); Tom Waits, Bad As

Me (Anti-); Wilco, The Whole Love (dBpm);

New Discoveries: Cam Penner, Michael Rault, Samantha Savage Smith

Shannon Webb-Campbell: Journalist, writer and photographer: Adele, 21 (XL); Rich Aucoin, We're All Dying To Live (Sonic Records); Austra, Feel It Break (Dominos); Bon Iver, Bon Iver (Jagjaguwar); Dance Movie, Ladycops (Independent); The Decemberists, The King Is Dead (Capitol); Jenn Grant, Honeymoon Punch (Six Shooter Records); Hey Rosetta, Seeds (Sonic Records); St. Vincent, Strange Mercy (4AD); Wild Flag, Wild Flag (Merge)

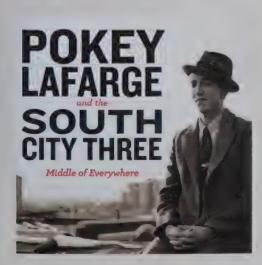
New Discoveries: Austra, Dance Movie, Wild Flag

Terry Wickham: Producer, Edmonton Folk Music Festival: Ryan Adams, Ashes and Fire (Capitol); The Barr Brothers, The Barr Brothers (Secret City); David Bromberg, Use Me (Appleseed); Bruce Cockburn, Small Source of Comfort (True North); Colin Hay, Gathering Mercury (Compass); Amos Lee, Last Days at the Lodge (Blue Note); Laura Marling, A Creature I Don't Know (Ribbon Music); Lori McKenna, Lorraine (Signature Sounds); James Vincent McMorrow, Early in the Morning (Vagrant); Ron Sexsmith, Long Player, Late Bloomer (Warner Brothers)

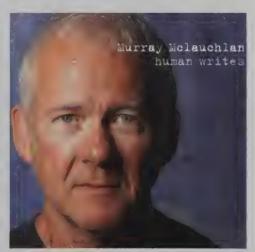
New Discoveries: David Wax Museum, Dry Bones, Paul McKenna

Michael Wrycraft: Graphic designer: Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, Kings and Queens (File Under Music); Michael Jerome Browne, The Road Is Dark (Borealis); Carlos del Junco & The Blues Mongrels, Mongrel Mash (Independent); Stephen Fearing, No Dress Rehearsal (Independent); James Hill, Man With A Love Song (Borealis); Ivy Mairi, No Talker (Latent); Murray McLauchlan, Human Writes (True North); Drew Nelson, Tilt-A-Whirl (Red House); Slide To Freedom, 20,000 Miles (Northern Blues) Ronley Teper's Lipliners, Alive (Independent)

New Discoveries: Drew Nelson, Joe Nolan, Karine Polwart







__ Tubthumping



A Real Live Wire

Iconic British guitarist and songwriter Richard Thompson takes a distinct approach to recording his latest live release. Jason Schneider calls R.T. at home.

ven for an artist as internationally revered as Richard Thompson, it requires a lot of faith in one's audience—or simply a lot of self-confidence—to play concerts that open with an entire album's worth of new material before even dipping a toe into the deep pool of fan favourites. But that's precisely what Thompson and his current band did during the January 2011 performance in Glasgow captured on the recent DVD/Blu-Ray release *Live At Celtic Connections*.

Although the second half of the show does present stellar renditions of many Thompson solo classics, including *Tear Stained Letter* and *Wall of Death*, the first half's intense focus on Thompson's last album, *Dream Attic*, is not entirely surprising considering it was recorded live as well, primarily during a three-night stand at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall in February 2010.

Comparing those performances a year

apart should prove to be a fascinating exercise for Thompson's eternally dedicated fan base. Yet the singer/guitarist and British folk-rock institution admits that he couldn't turn down the production company's offer to film the Glasgow show since he believes the *Dream Attic* material had been evolving on a nightly basis since the record came out.

"There's something about playing live that's very hard to get in the studio,"
Thompson says. "I enjoy recording in the studio, too, but that always feels like you're taking the best elements you can think of for a song and creating a static document.
When you play live, some of that stuff goes out the window and it's replaced by a lot of energy from simply being in front of an audience. I can safely say now that my music has been driven by live performance rather than record sales, so I'm always happy when people can share that live experience in one form or another."

When asked what he feels has allowed him to develop so much new material in concert recently, Thompson cites a mutual level of respect between himself and his fans, most of whom, he maintains, are like him: willing and often eager to be challenged.

"It's taken a while to cultivate that mutual respect but I think it helps as an artist that you don't totally pander to the audience at any time," he says. "If you start out as a live performer by not just playing the hits, you might get knocked for it. Conversely, if you become complacent with your live performances, the audience eventually starts to challenge you back by demanding new stuff. So finding that balance is a result of a kind of dialogue, which I've found interesting, and ultimately creatively stimulating."

That dialogue has helped produce
Thompson's consistently satisfying output
over the past 30 years since his partnership
with ex-wife Linda ended, a body of work
that arguably outshines those produced
by his peers during that same time period.
Certainly, none have demonstrated more
dedication to the craft of songwriting as
Thompson has, which, in tandem with his
untouchable reputation as one of the best
guitarists of his generation, supports the notion that, at age 63, he has not yet reached
his artistic peak.

Part of what has kept Thompson's work vital are his skills at writing convincingly about the current state of the world as he sees it, as well as evoking vivid images of people and places that are gone. There was no shortage of either approach on *Dream Attic*, from his homage to '60s Swinging London's dark underbelly, *Demons In Her Dancing Shoes*, to the thinly veiled poke at a certain self-righteous, one-named British rock star, *Here Comes Geordie*, and the track *Burning Man*, a tribute to the neopagan festival held annually in the Nevada desert.

"I think it's true that I draw from the past and present, but the future as well," Thompson says. "As you get older, you think about mortality, that you have a time limit. You start pondering philosophical questions—the nature of life, meaning and morality—and that all becomes part of the mature artist's subject matter."

Perhaps the best example of that on *Dream Attic* was its opening track, *The Money Shuffle*, which also kicks off *Live At Celtic Connections*. Written in the midst of the furor over the U.S. government's corporate bailouts, it now sounds like a portent of what Occupy demonstrators the world over tried to convey last year. Thompson speaks supportively of the movement, observing that, "It's symptomatic of the deepening divide between the classes of America that's been occurring since the 1980s when

the extremely rich started getting richer and richer through a real graft that you can't even measure.

"The middle class, which was one of America's real strengths, is being driven into poverty through political measures. At some point this is going to come to a real crisis, and the Occupy Movement is the beginning of a serious process of addressing the reality that people are really starting to hurt. If the political system isn't able to accommodate them, there's going to be big trouble."

Having lived predominantly in Los Angeles since the early '80s, Thompson's opinion does carry weight. He also has connections to Canada that are just as dear to him, not only through his longstanding ties to the Wainwright/McGarrigle clan but other relatives as well. "I have a cousin who lives in Vancouver," he says. "She has a lavender farm, and I always like spending time there when I can. Canada, as a whole, is a beautiful country, and it just seems like a saner place in which to live compared to the U.S. I guess that's because it feels more European, and I especially get that sense whenever I'm in Quebec."

He adds this tantalizing note that Toronto fans might do well to recall the next time Thompson is in town: "I appreciate that Toronto has at least three snooker halls. Whenever we're doing a show there, a good game of snooker is usually the first thing I'm looking for when I get into town."

Girl Power

Irish-American traditional musicians Cherish The Ladies collaborate with the likes of Vince Gill, Nanci Griffith and Alison Brown on their oh-sogood latest disc, Country Crossroads. Tim Readman appears in awe.

he's always on the go, that Joanie Madden. The founder member of Cherish the Ladies manages to squeeze me into her crazy schedule to talk about their latest CD, the Nashville-inspired *Country Crossroads*, while driving from New York to Florida. She's on her way to perform on an Irish-themed Caribbean cruise.

"We're about to rock the boat in a way the boat has never been rocked before," she gushes with characteristic enthusiasm.

Cherish the Ladies, the six-piece, NYC-based, all-woman band and world ambassadors for Irish music are now in their 28th year. So how did it all start?

"We owe it all to Dr. Mick Moloney," she says, name-checking the internationally recognized folklorist, professional musician, and expert on Irish-American music. "He was the first one to really notice that women were taking a serious role in Irish music. Really for centuries that music had been passed down from fathers to sons. Mick noticed that music was being passed to daughters and women were becoming tradition bearers in Irish music."

With his encouragement, a few concerts were organized in New York City featuring some of the top women musicians, many of whom were all-Ireland championship winners. "I suggested the name of Cherish the Ladies," she continues. "It's the title of a jig from the 17th century and everybody played it, so I thought why not?"

Keeping any band working is a challenge but doing so for close to 30 years is a major achievement—so what's her secret?

"From the outset we had such a great time; not only have I been lucky enough to surround myself with fabulous musicians but all these girls have become my best friends. We all had similar backgrounds and grew up with our dads playing music and we all picked it up and carried it on because we fell in love with the music. The key to keeping going—to tour China, Europe, Britain, Ireland and sell out halls with 2,500 seats—is that the phone keeps ringing and people still want us ... so for now we'll keep at it."

Listening to the album, with its dense arrangements and interplay between the different musical styles, I had wondered how the plan for making *Country Cross-roads* came together, and how the subtle arrangements were developed. It must have taken a lot of preparation to get it sounding so good, I thought. She shatters that notion in one fell swoop!

"There was not one ounce of planning. There was not one intention of recording. It just happened that we went out to a Nashville club with Maura O'Connell and it all happened from there." She asked when they were going to record a song with her, since many other guest singers like Arlo Guthrie and Pete Seeger had featured on past recordings. "There were quite a few other musicians present and as we got talking...well, the next thing I knew I was on the phone at 11 o'clock at night finding a recording studio. The first phone call was to Garry West who owns Compass records and he said something he had lined up just fell through. I told him we needed an engineer, so then he called me back and said he



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got someone and it turned out he got Chad Carlson—the engineer/producer who did Taylor Swift's last Grammy Award-winning album. We went back to the Performing Arts Centre and we rehearsed until 2:30 a.m. putting the arrangements together."

The next step was to go straight into the studio with guests Maura O'Connell, Alison Brown on banjo, Dobro player Rob Ickes, bassist Dennis Crouch, pump organist Jeff Taylor and fiddlers Liz Carroll, CTL graduate Eileen Ivers and Liz Knowles. Texan songbird and devout Irish music fan Nanci Griffith dropped by, too.

Perhaps most impressive was getting country music superstar Vince Gill to sing *Donegal Rain*. "I got the nerve up to talk to him. I said, 'Vince, we're in town and we are going to be in the studio the next couple of days and we'd like you to join us,' and he said he would love to. We had to work to teach him how to pronounce Donegal. Now it's a big huge hit in Ireland. It's on the radio every day!"

At this point I can almost feel her glowing with pride through the phone line...and then she's off again excitedly describing what happened once they hit the studio.

"Everything was spontaneous: we went in and played the tracks for the boys...we had chord charts but that was about all we had...and whatever came about came about. All the basic tracks were done in three days—we knocked the whole thing out. We did some overdubbing back in New York but 95 per cent was done in those three days of creativity. I wanted the Irish music with a taste of the bluegrass and old-time instruments. We let them show off their stuff. It was great to go down a different road a little bit, but at the end of the day we definitely try to keep within the boundaries that is in the music that our fathers passed down to us."

Never one to rest on her laurels, Joanie immediately began booking live shows for the newly minted ensemble. "When we went to Celtic Connections in Glasgow we took the gang over and launched the record there. In all my 27 years it was in the top five gigs we ever did. We want to take it to the Ryman Theatre, too."

I ask her what's next and I am happy to hear that negotiations for a Canadian tour are underway. "We have the cruise, then a February/March tour...then we head back to China in the spring time...and our summer's filling up, then we are back to Ireland in September. Times are tough out there for folk music—well, for the whole music industry. We'll just keep ploughing along and keep the tunes flowing. This music has been around a couple of hundred years and it's our job to make sure it stays with us and then gets passed down again."

It couldn't be in safer—or more enthusiastic—hands!

Spirits Rising

Cam Penner grew up amidst the fire and brimstone of a caring Mennonite community. That compelling mix of darkness and light appears on Gypsy Summer, his most accomplished album to date. Eric Volmers raises ghosts from Penner's past.

recent status update on Cam Penner's Facebook page describes the inspiration behind his song *Ghost Car*, the gently rolling third track off his fourth album, *Gypsy Summer*.

It was during a six-month road trip Penner took a few years back with his "sweetheart." They were pulled over on the side of the road amid the Sierra Nevada mountain range in California. She was double-fisting drinks—gin and juice in one hand, vodka-lime in the other—and he had his arms around her waist. They could hear the stream running, smell the sugar pine and, as an added bonus, could sense the ghost of Woody Guthrie lingering nearby. It all sounds pretty romantic for a Facebook update.

But, as it turns out, there's more to the story. It also involves a close encounter with the long arm of the law that may account for the dark hints of Nebraska-era, Springsteen-esque desperation in the song.

"We got pulled over by the state troopers," says the songwriter over pints at a pub in his hometown of Calgary, a grin breaking through his long shaggy beard. "You know, we had some illegal substances in the car and stuff. I had played this old saloon and I had finished the show and these guys came up and said, 'Did you know Woody Guthrie used to play here back in the day?' It was all these experiences that came from living by the skin of your teeth, by allowing life to happen."

Penner doesn't actually come out and suggest it was Woody's ghost that helped





steer the trooper away from his stash. But the spirits that guide Penner's music do tend to be of the friendly, helpful sort. His most expansive and versatile album yet, *Gypsy Summer* is haunted by some impressive muses. There are the thousands of storytelling voices that have stayed with him from his 13 years working with the desperate and homeless in shelters and soup kitchens. There's the influence of the still-living and lively Al Green, whose soulful music became the unlikely starting point for the sounds Penner was hearing in his head. And finally there was the location of the makeshift studio where he recorded with a handful of musicians last year, including members of the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. For two weeks, the group stayed at a secluded ranch near the Alberta hamlet of Twin Butte, pushing Penner's roots-rock and folksongs into some unexpected places.

"It was the space, the energy," says Penner, who first played a show at the spot more than a dozen years earlier. "It was old. It felt like there were old ghosts around there. It seemed like really old spiritual native land there, too, which once it was. It was the wolves, the coyotes, the bears. It was really secluded. There was no cellphone, no wireless connection. People couldn't call their kids."

This occasionally made for some tense sessions. Penner had a fairly clear vision in his head as to what he wanted the album to sound like but not always the musical background to properly explain it to his more classically schooled players. Yet despite some "heated" moments, the results speak for themselves. *Gypsy Summer* is arguably Penner's most accomplished and certainly his most successful album to date. It has received positive reviews in both North America and Europe. It also made the *Billboard* charts, which had previously been uncharted territory for the singer/songwriter.

"I wasn't an asshole but I was pretty adamant about what I wanted to happen," he says. "I only let the guys hear those songs a week before we went there. We never rehearsed. We went down there and just played. I wanted there to be a spontaneity."

Penner schooled himself in underground hip-hop and old Al Green in the months before the recording, although even he admits those influences don't exactly shine through in the final product.

Still, the results are much more eclectic and full-sounding than his often-harrowing, politically charged, lo-fi 2009 release *Trouble & Mercy. Gypsy*'s opening folk track, *Driftwood*, may start with the lyric, "*It's going to get worse before it gets better*", but it eventually becomes a song of hope. It even offers a nod to Bruce Cockburn with the line "keep kicking the dark until the light shines through".

From the swelling strings on the ballad *Hey My My My* to the rhythmic groove of *Throw Your Hands Up*, Penner offers a compelling mix of darkness and light.

All of which seems to reflect a personal history full of conflicting forces. He grew up in the Mennonite community of Steinbach, MN, the same hometown that provided dark inspiration for CanLit royalty Miriam Toews's novel *A Complicated Kindness*. The religious atmosphere could be stifling, Penner says. But his family, while Mennonite, were the town's rebels. His grandfather was a bootlegger. His father was a "greaser" who drove a souped-up Dodge and ran an illegal roadhouse outside of town.

In the Mennonite community, any music other than hymns was frowned upon. But Penner's parents had a big vinyl collection that introduced their son to folk and rock'n'roll. The family was impoverished but his mother and father strongly believed in taking care of their neighbours. What little they had, they shared.

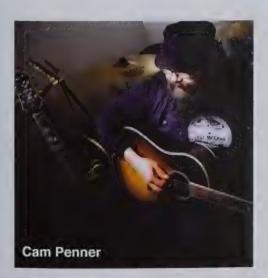
"There's an ominous presence there because of the religious upbringing and it's very much hell and brimstone," Penner says. "But there really was a community that I believe in. A community that supports each other, never letting each other go hungry, never letting each other go homeless."

At 18 Penner left with friends for Chicago, where he ended up working in a soup kitchen. He stayed in social work for the next 13 years, mostly in Calgary at the city's drop-in centre.

At the time of this interview, he was planning another tour of Europe. He was working as a janitor for a company run by his parents, who now live in Calgary. Six weeks earlier, his "sweetheart" had given birth to a daughter, the couple's first child.

It's a life change that has Penner looking both happy and exhausted and sounding philosophical. It's been a few years since he quit his job as a social worker. But the stories and lessons he soaked up from the desperate lives around him continue to roam about in his imagination, he says. Those are the ghosts that won't go away. Nor does he want them to.

"You can't keep that dark cloak on you all the time," he says. "But you keep pieces of it in your wallet or your pocket so you have reminders. You talk about it, you sing about it, you write about it and you kind of find a freedom. I'm glad to have that as a history."





Heavy Mettle

Ohbijou made their name up. It just sounded good, like the thoughful and mysterious poetic songs they write. Shannon Webb-Campbell sifts through the intellectual and geographical terrain that provides their new disc, Metal Meets, with its spirit.

oth ethereal and poetic, Toronto's Ohbijou's creatively lush album, *Metal Meets*, takes listeners on a symphonic journey through damp earth, volcanoes, lakes and mysterious waterfalls.

Opening with the powerfully elemental *Niagara Falls*, *Metal Meets* explores various landscapes and terrain with mystique and melody. Singer and songwriter Casey Mecija's buoyant voice seductively narrates two lovers packing their bags to feel the mist with heavy riffs and guitar progression.

At the height of the song, she sings: "I'll follow you down. I dreamt this love, a memory still returning."

"I was reading a lot of work by Dionne Brand at the time and she was just talking about this idea of memory and memory as something that is always persisting," says Mecija. "I took that and tried to inject that into the lyrics. I used the idea of love and sort of tried to explore it through something as powerful as the falls."

Crafted while on various cabin retreats in Northern Ontario, Ohbijou follows up their light-lifting album *Beacons* with the stronger, darker, 11-track *Metal Meets*. For a band once deeply influenced by the city of Toronto, *Metal Meets*' vantage point now spans a worldly panoramic view with Asian, European and North American perspectives. It was recorded in Montreal's Breakglass Studios with producer Jace Lasek, who plays in the Besnard Lakes.

Mecija describes *Metal Meets* as a poetic offering. "*Metal Meets* is a song on the record and a lyric that appears a number of times in the lyrics of different songs," says Mecija. "The song itself is a love song. I always say that the album is a love story, an effort in exploring relationship—elemental between two people or between anyone. I guess the idea of *Metal Meets* best captures what we were trying to do with this record."

While writing *Metal Meets*, Mecija spent months with her nose buried in books while working on her masters of sociology. Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, a verse novel loosely based on the myth of Geryon and the Tenth Labor of Herakles,

deeply influenced Mecija's writing. Carson is known for her sparse language, in-depth insights and rich metaphor; Mecija writes in a similar fashion.

"It's one of the most beautiful books I've ever read," she says. "Her writing is so dramatic and powerful yet so simple. It was something I was trying to emulate in my own writing and lyrics."

In an excerpt from Carson's *Autobiog-raphy of Red*, she writes: "Word bounce. Words, if you let them, will do what they want to do and what they have to do."

While being held together by melody, Mecija knows when she finds the right words a song bounces into the atmosphere only to resonate in the heart's pocket. In the gorgeously moving track Scalpel Blade, she muses, "I dreamt you were the sea; a scalpel inside me. You let me in. I walked through where you've been."

"The music and lyrics usually happen at life same time," she says. "For me the process involves sitting at a piano or sitting with a guitar, trying to hammer it all out at the same time. Sometimes I'll jot down ideas for songs; usually it all happens at once."

Her succinct diction, meditation on dreaming and reflection on memory is constant throughout the album. Touring and exploring both intellectual and geographical terrain created the tones and themes of *Metal Meets*.

"We had been doing a lot of touring with the last record, *Beacons*. We were able to tour abroad, spend some time on the road and away from home," says Mecija. "Being away from our community in Toronto and our loved ones, discovering new places, we gained a deeper, more complex look at the world. We grew as a band during these travels, individually as well. I think being away from home and travel were really big influences on this record."

Ohbijou is a project of multi-instrumentalists who approach music as a family. While Mecija sings and plays guitar, ukulele and piano, her sister, Jennifer Mecija, rounds out Ohbijou's sound on violin, hamochord, glockenspiel, melodica and harmonies. Heather Kirkby is on bass and banjo, James Bunton lends his skills to

drums and trumpet, Anissa Hart is on cello and Ryan Carley plays piano, synth, glockenspiel, electric piano and harpsichord.

"The band name is a made-up name," she says. "It's a term of endearment, something that came out spontaneously. It sounded nice, suited the esthetic of the band and the sounds we're trying to make."

Where *Metal Meets* borders on the darker aspects, 2009's *Beacons* is filled with lightness. Ohbijou's debut, *Swift for Troubling Times*, released in 2006, set the tone for what's become one of the most creative and endearing Canadian bands. Instead of diving into the deep, *Metal Meets* gives each instrument a time to shine in shallow waters. Every arrangement and note was thoughtfully decided upon.

"Our songwriting comes from a more mature place. On this record we really thought of what process will work out best; even coming from a decision like that is mature," says Mecija. "Our previous records were really scattered and all over the place. We needed to buckle down, be alone and make things sound as cohesive as possible."



Living in Toronto is filled with distraction, life and activity. Ohbijou found the several retreats from the city to the Bruce Peninsula imperative to *Metal Meets*, yet couldn't imagine having their band based anywhere else.

"We're lucky to live in Toronto, by a lot of friends who make awesome music, having that sort of community and network and musicians," she says. "We're touring with a band called Snow Blink, a couple who play this amazing and beautiful orchestrated music.

"We were watching their set last night, and I thought. 'I need to practice my guitar more'. I think the greatest influences are the ones within arm's reach. I'm so lucky to watch my friends make music and see how they go, and it inspires me to work harder at our craft."

The Dead Zone

Step aside Alice Cooper, The Agnostic-Phibes Rhythm and Blood Conspiracy takes horror-rock and murder ballads into the twilight zone with their gloriously eerie album, Campfire Tales. Maghan Campbell clutches her garlands of garlic.

The official story is delightfully macabre. The Agnostic-Phibes Rhythm and Blood Conspiracy autobiography has members of Calgary's defunct Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir (henceforth to be known as AMGC ... Lordy, lordy! Long enough band names, people!!!) seeking out a legendary musical genius—a man rumoured to have gone completely mad through self-imposed isolation in the woods, somewhere in Western Canada. When they finally find him, the madman comes to accept them for their musical prowess, and agrees to record with them in that lonely, isolated cabin. The resulting tunes, packaged under the moniker of Campfire Tales, are as eerie as the nearby cackling of coyotes in the night. Truly, any journalist would drool over such a note-worthy beginning.

"What ... you're not buying it?" snickers Bob Keelaghan, co-fronter of the APRBC, as I prod him with my hard-hitting questions. The madman in question is Tom Bagley, a.k.a. Jackson Phibes. For those not up to date on Calgary's horror-rock



scene (yes, there is one), Phibes is the front man of Forbidden Dimension—a bad-ass rock'n'roll band of cult status who draw their lyrical inspiration from B-movie horror flicks. Cannibal mountain women, eat yer hearts out! It turns out, however, that Phibes and Keelaghan are old friends.

"I was out somewhere having a drink with Tom and his wife," recounts Keelaghan, "when Tom jokingly asked me how I thought he could get onto the folk fest circuit (well you know, it's lucrative!). I half jokingly replied, murder ballads! We could do a record of murder ballads, and we [The AMGC] could be your backing band!"

The joke persisted onwards, with neither Phibes nor Keelaghan actually pursuing it beyond the realm of comedy ... until one day, with the departure of singer and guitarist Judd Palmer, the AMGC went on hiatus (it's official now, Keelaghan confirms, they've broken up). The band still had a show booked, but instead of cancelling the gig, Keelaghan called up Phibes and said, "Let's actually do this thing". A couple years and many gigs later, the Rhythm and Blood Conspiracy are going strong.

So, an old-school horror-rocker performing with a bunch of folkies: what could such a bizarre union possibly entail?

"Tom brings that B-movie sense of

humour to the table," explains Keelaghan, while he and the Agnostics' Vladimir Sobolewski (upright bass), and Jason Woolley (drums) provide the kind of "folk music with balls," a heavily rhythmic and aggressive combination of old-time blues, country and Appalachian mountain music, that the AMGC were known for. Of course, Bagley's punk rock attitude lends the songs a razor-sharp edge, and doesn't hinder the band's intensity either. The Rhythm and Blood Conspiracy's eerie numbers also turn out to be a perfect showcase for both Phibes and Keelaghan's hefty guitar chops, neither of which are anything to sneer at.

As for the murder ballads, they turn out to be an ideal meeting point for folk music and horror-rock. Here, longtime song tradition meets ghoulish, shock-value entertainment.

"Old-time murder ballads were all about journalism," recounts Keelaghan. Indeed, with such charming titles as *Trial and Sentence of William Miller for the Horrid Murder of a Clergyman and his Housekeeper at Chelsea* or *The Wittam Miller, Being the Account of his Murdering his Sweetheart* (a possible ancestor of *Knoxville Girl*, performed famously by Charlie Louvin), the murder ballads of renaissance Britain were the tabloids of the day.

They were printed gleefully by penny



presses, preferably while the blood was still fresh on the jilted maiden's hands. Today they'd be the kind of tales one cannot help themselves but ogle in the check-out line, perhaps printed on the cover of *The National Enquirer* next to the gripping news item "Oprah Gives Birth to Bat Boy."

As years passed and the tradition leapt across the Atlantic, those songs of murder and moral demise morphed, becoming more concise, often more poetic folksongs. Classic murders like *Pretty Polly* and *Knoxville Girl* are just a few examples of tunes whose tales have survived and adapted over hundreds of years to arrive squarely in the American folk tradition.

We North Americans haven't been shy about exploiting our own carnage, either. You've got your Stagger Lees, your Frankie and Johnny's, and, well, all the songs off *Campfire Tales*.

Phibes and Keelaghan worked together to write this combination of grim musical journalism, urban legends, folk tales, and bizarre real life adventures. The slow burning Who Fears the Devil explores the real murder of Øystein Aarseth by Norwegian black metal star Varg Vikernes. "The early black metal scene was full of kids and young adults. They thought, in order to be really evil, they should start burning down churches (obviously!). Eventually they started murdering each other," delights Keelaghan. The Rhythm and Blood Conspiracy lapped it up.

The Gypsy-jazz twinged Wolfman Franz is a tale Keelaghan credits to former Agnostics bandmate Judd Palmer. "When he was younger, he took a big trip to Europe. He ended up spending a wild night with this guy in Hungary who was obviously insane, or doing a good job of faking it. He was this big, hairy guy who would go out on his balcony and howl like a wolf so that everyone thought he was crazy, and he could collect his disability." Say what? And Windigo Song draws upon the evil force of Algonquian myth, a spirit that can get inside you and cause you to do very, very naughty things. "There was a mad trapper up North," Keelaghan regales. "He had eaten his entire family. He

blamed it on the Windigo." Wonderful stuff! Old Stagger Lee's looking like a Boy Scout at this point.

Campfire Tales begins with such an innocent line: "harken to me children / let's hear some campfire tales!". But parents be warned: the cute little cartoon forest critters sitting so naively around the fire on the album cover are incredibly misleading! Inside bodes something quite sinister indeed. Instead, bring your young ones to your local folk fest this summer, where hopefully Phibes, Keelaghan, and the Rhythm and Blood Conspiracy fulfil their own punch line. In a perfect world, they'll scare the crap out of your kids from the stage as the sun sets in the sky, bulbous, pulpy, and red.

Blue Highways

Dave Alvin never writes on the road. Not until he made Eleven Eleven, with its gritty, immensely literate narratives, that is. Numerology, by the ever-resourceful Tony Montague.

he words on Dave Alvin's homepage could be the opening of a novel about gunslingers and guitarists. "There are two types of folk music: quiet folk music and loud folk music. I play both."

Alvin isn't a musician trying to find words for a melody, he's a true writer, and the compositions on his latest album, *Eleven Eleven*, unfold like chapters in an Americana travelogue filled with characters as vivid and compelling as anything by John Steinbeck or Jack Kerouac.

The songs—loud, quiet, and mostly shades between—blend blues, rockabilly, country and folk in varied combinations. All bear the Alvin hallmark of finely crafted lyrics, brilliantly fluent guitar playing, and rich and gravelly vocals that sound as if they've marinated for decades in a barrel of bourbon, which they have—more or less.

Eleven Eleven is organic—a word Alvin uses a couple of times in the course of his *Penguin Eggs* interview.

He's hardly the granola type, though pretty laidback. Alvin likes to let things happen naturally and develop in their own way, without forcing. He's a Californian through and through, but gritty, blue-collar, and with roots entangled in history and culture. As for the title, there's an additional layer of significance beyond the obvious—11 songs in '11—since it's Alvin's eleventh release.

Normally he composes at home but this time the Grammy Award-winning song-writer set himself the challenge of doing it while on the road—where the former member of The Blasters and X lives for most of the year.

"We've been on tour since May basically," says Alvin, reached appropriately while being driven through North Carolina with the Guilty Ones, the tight outfit he put together earlier this year for *Eleven Eleven*. "The nature of touring doesn't lend itself to a writing state of mind because every day is based around getting from point A to point B."

Alvin wrote the songs while touring with his previous outfit, the Guilty Women. "The average distance is 300 miles so you get up at 9 and leave at 10, drive 300 miles, check into a motel, throw your suitcase in the room, turn around, and immediately drive to the sound-check, which can last anywhere from a half hour to two and a half hours. Hopefully you have time to eat, then come back and play the gig, go to bed, wake up, and repeat the process. So there's not a lot of time for self reflection"

Most guitarists would end up writing about being on the road, but not Alvin—he doesn't go for the obvious. *Eleven Eleven* has a great cast list of characters with dark twists to their stories. Like his friend and sometime collaborator Tom Russell or Richard Thompson, Alvin loves to play with the point of view of a song's narrative. He can suggest much with just a few words and a wonderfully expressive guitar.

Joaquin Murrieta's Head is a prime instance of Alvin's intelligence and craft, as well as his keen sense of history. It concerns Joaquin Murrieta, a Californian outlaw in the years immediately following the 1849 gold rush, who was regarded by Mexicans as a hero of resistance to the new settlers. The California Rangers hunted him down in the back country, and a head said



to be Murrieta's—preserved in alcohol for verification—was displayed throughout the new state.

"There are a few songs that have been written about Murrieta, and they all take one point of view—which may be the right one—which is Murrieta as this Robin Hood figure. And I've always wanted to write about him but not another song about him riding through the hills. I wanted to tie it into bigger things. So the idea of writing it about a guy who's going to kill him was more interesting to me. Why is he trying to track him down? What does that say about California, about economic inequalities where one poor guy's going to try to shoot another poor guy to get some money?"

The bounty hunter is not the only character from the margins of American society past and present, real and imagined. There's the Russian roulette-playing early rocker in Johnny Ace Is Dead, the lovelorn drifter in the electric bluesy opener Harlan County Line, the gritty one-eyed ex-boxer from L.A. in Run Conejo, whose life story goes "from the hot streets of Tucson to a cold prison in Quebec"—a portrait of a survivor set to an edgy Bo Diddley beat. The singer in No Worries Mija is about to take part in some unspecified risky and shady operation, and tries reassuring his sweetheart not very convincingly—that all will be well as it's something he's done before.

The marginal characters in *Eleven Eleven* ironically include Dave and his brother,

Phil, themselves, whose personal and artistic relations have been rocky. Their conflicts in The Blasters were notorious, leading to Dave's abrupt exit in 1986. Fences have been mended now and the waspish rhythm-and-blues *What's Up With Your Brother?* marks their first duet on record. In the song, each one complains about the only question everyone asks. It ends in a hilarious rapid-fire argument that no doubt picks up a few real barbs the Alvins have traded.

Inspiration for the song came in the men's washroom at a gig. "Some guy said, 'Hey, Dave, what's up with your brother?'. Then after the show I was in there again and another guy comes in and says basically the same thing: 'What's wrong with your brother, man?'. I thought instantly: I have to phone. We've been getting along pretty well in the past couple of years, so I called Phil and said, 'Hey, I'm writing a song for us, will you record it?', and he said, 'Yeah'. There are some people who've never forgiven me for leaving The Blasters."

As for the slagging match that concludes the song, it happened organically, of course. "We were vamping out on this one chord and I just dropped, 'Hey, Phil, nice to be playing with you again', and figured that would be it. But he picked up the ball and ran with it. 'I told you if you kept acting that way you'd end up looking like that', and I wound up as the straight man. It was ... 'Thanks, Phil, that was great'."



Moody Blues

The Strumbellas write the saddest lyrics. Yet, they wrap them up in happy tunes. Their attention-grabbing latest release, My Father and discounter, brims with personality, reckons Patrick Langston.

aunty music, sad lyrics: it's a classic songwriting formula. Just think of The Statler Brothers' 1960s country hit Counting Flowers on the Wall and, two decades later, Culture Club's Karma Chameleon; the latter even included a harmonica with bluesy accents, blues being the champion of juxtaposing happy and miserable in one song.

Like whistling in the dark, there's a tension between the two opposing elements. It makes for surprise and closer attention to the song when you find your bobbing head abruptly called up short by a lyric like, "I don't want to die | But it's everywhere I go". The line is from Lakes, a rapid-fire track on My Father and the Hunter, the debut full-length album by Toronto-based The Strumbellas.

The band does it again in the anti-war *Pistol* when they sing, "I don't want to die / But I will try to tell the only one I've ever loved ... goodbye" to the tune of a rattling, punk-influenced beat.

"(Rockers) Blind Melon did that—really fun music with sad words," says Simon Ward, principal songwriter and vocalist for the seven-member band. "*No Rain* was the happiest song with the saddest lyrics."

When The Strumbellas—for whom the label folk-pop-grass-indie rock works as well as any—want to up the happy ante, they frequently turn to a big pop sound.

"We love pop music and big hooks," says pianist/organist/percussionist David Ritter. "Not a lot of the band members listen to bluegrass and dirty old country. I'm a big Beach Boys fan."

Beach Boy-reminiscent harmonies surf through tunes like *The Bird That Follows Me*, another tune haunted by death but this time set to a decidedly sombre tempo. And, as they often did in the case of the Beach Boys, here the harmonies may suggest sunny California but they're wistful, too, as though having reached the idyllic West Coast these folks still haven't arrived at where they yearn to be.

The pop sound, jokes James Oliver (banjo, ukulele, piano), has a lot to do with Ward's attention span. "He loves beautiful music that's over fast."

Do The Strumbellas censor the pop element to avoid sliding into sugar-rush territory?

Yes, they have, at least a little, says Oliver. No way, rejoins Ritter staunchly, saying the band works at producing the best possible sound, period.

As for the sad undercurrent in those burnished songs, Ward says it's his preferred musical habitat.

"My Walkman is filled with sad songs. If

I had a choice, I'd write all sad songs with happy music." The other two demur, saying they lean more to happy material in their music collections.

The band, in other words—or at least the 50 per cent of it being interviewed via Skype—enjoys a healthy diversity of opinion. Kind of like the range of instruments and genres that join forces on their engaging new CD.

Working on the record changed the dynamic within the band. Producing their self-titled 2008 EP had been a Saturday afternoon kind of effort, done just for the love of it, says Ritter. This time, there was government and private sector support, a professional producer and engineer, and a public relations company, Indoor Recess, that's worked with the likes of Sarah Slean and Arcade Fire.

"It puts us on another level as a group," says Oliver. "When you spend that much time together (in the studio), you have to sort out problems. It's less of a hobby and more of a profession."

He adds that putting the music on a CD seems outdated, what with iTunes and the rest of the cyber world ruling the roost. But, he says, the band grew up with CDs just as a previous generation has grown up with vinyl and wanted to catch the final wave of the CD before it vanished. They also wanted to give listeners perhaps a last chance to hold something in their hands while listening to the music.

(Why we like to have that tactile and visual connection to an auditory experience is something worth pondering.)

Does the band worry that listeners won't hear what the band hoped they'd hear while they were recording the disc?

Ritter and Oliver are less than concerned, saying they simply set out to make something they loved. Ward is "scared to death" about how people will respond to it—a needless fear because the album is an attention grabber, full of personality in a musical world where that's not always the case.

Those attention grabbers include *Diane*. It's a haunting, almost ethereal song, the lady of its title a combination of Ward's mother and *Anne of Green Gables*. Ward was reading Lucy Maud Montgomery's classic when he wrote the tune, which he calls the "most Canadian of all our songs".

The shadow of Ward's father also looms

large in the album, from its title to its dedication to Earl Brian Ward to lines about a father cropping up in several songs. That's also his photo on the front cover of the CD. And one suspects that the short closing track, *Carry My Body*, was inspired by Ward's father, who died when the musician was just a teenager.

Ward says he hasn't yet figured out how that death over a decade ago affected him, though it's something he still wonders about almost daily. "All I know is there's just this hole..."

Ward, like most of his band mates, is from Lindsay, a prototype of small-town Ontario. Ritter, by contrast, is from Oshawa, home to the head office of General Motors Canada and now part of the Greater Toronto Area.

"We all live in Toronto," says Ritter, "but I'm now from Toronto. The other guys, they're still from Lindsay. They still have family there and have more of a sense of being from a place than I do."

Ward and Oliver agree. "When you grow up in a small town," says the latter, "you always feel like you're missing something. Then you get to the city and realize you had everything."

Devil in Disguise

With a name like Belzébuth, this sextet obviously avoids gospel. While their music is solidly rooted in Québecois culture, they do wander wonderfully into Irish and French traditions. Tony Montague offers sympathy for the devil.

he devil, Old Nick, seems to be everywhere in traditional Quebecois culture—hiding in the shadows, creeping around the church or barn, waiting at the crossroads for unsuspecting passersby. Le yab' is a familiar presence in innumerable songs, jokes, stories and legends. He loves music and dance, of course—in fact, he's an amazing fiddler himself, always out to party hard.

Ten years ago a group of young musicians boldly decided to give the tail of the prince of darkness a tug. They named their band Belzébuth—the French variant of Beelzebub, one of Lucifer's more ancient



monikers—and titled their excellent debut Les Péchés du Diable [The Devil's Sins]. On the cover was the black silhouette of a winged devil with violin.

"People outside of Quebec often think we're satanic in some way, but that's not how it is at all," explains Jean-Benoit Landry, the frontman for Belzébuth, with a laugh. "We pick up on his folkloric aspect, which is usually more comic than sinister.

"The legend that inspires us in particular is one where he appears at a house party as a mysterious visitor, disguised with a big hat, and starts playing fiddle," continues Landry, who just happens to be a fiddler himself, as well as the sextet's percussionist and lead singer.

"He's a fantastic musician and everyone starts dancing wildly, especially the girls. You can imagine the rest. That's the devil we relate to, the one who adds something boisterous to the evening—or as we say in French, *qui endiable la veillée*."

The musicians of Belzébuth paint from a large palette of instrumental colours. In addition to Landry, who also plays several types of drum, the band is comprised of Philippe Jetté, accordionist and chief podorhythmiste (foot-tapper), guitarist Francis Marion, Jean-Michel Roch on bass and banjo, mandolinist and bouzouki player Loui-Vincent Gagnon, and fiddler Marie-Maxime Piché Richer.

Like so many bands in the vanguard of new Quebecois folk—such as La Bottine Souriante, La Volée de Castors, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer, André Marchand, and Yves Lambert—Belzébuth is based in Lanaudière. The region of farmland and forest some 100 kilometres and more north of Montreal was first settled by the French in the 17th century, followed over the next couple of hundred years by deported Acadians, retired Scottish soldiers from the army, and Irish immigrants. Living side by side, they forged a new cultural identity.

"The tradition is very much alive," says Landry. "During the Christmas holidays you can find folk bands playing in several bars in Joliette, [Lanaudière's largest town], on the same night. And there are regular jam sessions here just like in Irish pubs. Plus, in the small town of Saint-Jean-de-Matha, for almost 10 years we have Le CRAPO."

The cleverly punning acronym stands, in English translation, for the Regional Centre for Oral Heritage Activities, a name that doesn't exactly trip off the tongue. "There are extensive archival resources for the music, songs, stories, and folklore of this region," says Landry. "But CRAPO is more than that. Some people have been hired to collect material in the community, and there's a café-bistro there with concerts and special presentations."

Belzébuth is also 10 years old this year and, to get the anniversary party rolling, the band has just put out *Suite* 8, its third release.

The album sets out briskly with the lying song *Jean-Claude Marquis*, driven, like a number of tracks, by the clip-clopping feet of Jetté. The next track, *Knocknagow*, begins superbly with a couple of thin and eerie guitar chords repeated over and over,



a few ripples of mandolin, before Roch launches into the Irish jig of the title on banjo, which changes rhythm and tempo to the Acadian *Reel Anne-Marie*. The band is in top gear but it's no hell-bent-for-leather romp. The arrangement is intelligent and varied, the playing strong and precise.

For their songs, Belzébuth's members rely on materials from CRAPO and other centres, print collections like those of the great Marius Barbeau (1883-1969), encounters with fellow musicians, and the extensive repertoires of their friends and family.

The jaunty *Hommage à Bernard Brisson* is a tribute by Jetté to his recently deceased great-uncle, a fiddler from Grand Rang de St Jacques. Jetté has done a lot of collecting, particularly in the Acadian parishes of Lanaudière. *Suite 8* also features Landry's *Paradis Sur Terre*, the first original song by a band member, which celebrates the Acadian settlers and has already been adopted as the theme song for the region's Nouvelle Acadie festival.

Belzébuth is rooted in traditional Quebecois music but also likes to range beyond. Two of the songs on Suite 8 come from France, and there are several Irish tunes—Knocknagow, a cracking version of The Morning Dew, and Tom Busby's Jig. On Les Péchés du Diable, one of the arrangements features an original instrumental, Feuille d'Arabe, with a distinctively Middle Eastern form and flavour. And on Suite 8 Landry contributes the unusual and beautiful Les Croisades (The Crusades) where the influence is more Hispanic and Sephardic.

"We're very open towards what we hear at the various festivals, and we absorb it all," says Landry. "So when we come to create our own arrangements of songs we sometimes like to let ourselves go a bit, extend our horizons, and make hybrids from different genres."

The Prince of Darkness may be as close as we get to Old Nick on Suite 8. But he's a worldly kind of a guy who readily crosses cultures and eras, and remains an inspirational figure to this day in Quebec, as Landry and his colleagues—and even a cursory look at beer labels—will confirm.

"He's not necessarily someone nasty," says Landry. "He adds spice to people's lives, just as we like to liven up the veillées [traditional evening gatherings] here, and gets everybody dancing and singing along."



Bluegrass Basics

Collaborating with Toronto's Foggy Hogtown Boys, Portland's Ivan Rosenberg takes bluegrass back to its experimental era essence. Mike Sadava details the award-winning instrumentalist's numerous Canadian connections.

van Rosenberg pines for the days when bluegrass was still a form of folk music.

The Portland, Oregon-based resophonic guitar and clawhammer banjo player grimaces when he hears fake accents and a Nashville-promoted aesthetic in bluegrass that has more to do with Allan Jackson and Travis Tritt than Ralph Stanley or Sonny Osborne.

"These days bluegrass has gone the direction of sounding like disposable modern country music. The IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association) is worried about hippy jam bands being called bluegrass but not about the effects of crappy modern country music," he says without naming names.

But Rosenberg's collaboration with the Foggy Hogtown Boys on their new disc, *The*

Hogtown Sessions, might be the antidote to this trend. Together they have taken a trip to the past. Not the distant past, when bluegrass was just starting in the '40s and '50s, but to the '60s and '70s, when the musicians were starting to take some liberties with the music but were still true to its roots. This was before bluegrass took some new directions, such as jazzy dawg music developed by David Grisman, or the rock 'n' roll-influenced music of the likes of Newgrass Revival or today's Nashville sound.

"We're trying to do bluegrass music that sounds like folk music rather than modern country music..." he says. "It's that we don't want to sound like bluegrass bands that are trying to sound like modern country bands."

Rosenberg has long scoured the record bins for bluegrass from the '60s and '70s, his favourite but long-neglected era for bluegrass, a time he has longed to honour.

The result is an 11-song collection that includes songs by Ralph Stanley, the Osborne Brothers, Woody Guthrie, Harland Howard and Buzz Busby (the father of bluegrass in Washington, D.C.) as well as originals by Rosenberg and Chris Coole.

It's a long way from Portland to Toronto, but Rosenberg has a long association with the Foggy Hogtown Boys and Canadian

roots musicians in general.

Rosenberg has taught for years at the British Columbia Bluegrass Workshop in Sorrento, and even served as director for a couple of years. That's where he first met Chris Coole, who plays banjo and guitar. They traded CDs but neither listened to the other's for almost a year, and they both reached the opinion that, "Hey, this is pretty good."

The following summer the rest of the Boys came to Sorrento and they became jamming buddies. In the interim, the association resulted in an old-time duet album by Coole and Rosenberg.

When Rosenberg got the idea for this project, he knew he wanted the Boys in on it because he hadn't heard anybody who came closer to the sound he wanted. After he was introduced to Busby's song, *Lost*, he knew that bass player Max Heineman had the perfect voice for it. The project grew from there, and Rosenberg travelled to Toronto to record with them at the home of mandolinist Andrew Collins's parents in Parry Sound, ON.

Rosenberg has adapted his resophonic playing to the style of that era. This was before Jerry Douglas and Rob Ickes, when Josh Graves, Mike Auldridge and Gene Wooten were on the cutting edge of Dobro. The playing is less busy, with fewer notes but more big slides.

"A lot of things that might sound simple are really hard to do ... and stay in tune," which is the biggest challenge for resophonic players.

Some of the Boys have also adapted their playing. Collins and fiddler John Showman also play with the Creaking Tree Quartet,

Ivan Rosenberg

which is much closer to jazz than bluegrass.

But Collins says all of the Boys have matured with the band over the past decade, and can apply enough restraint to play in the older style, which had its own quirks. "We all feel the album came off having that quirkiness but with all the drive of bluegrass music."

With five albums under their belt, the Boys "...know how to interact with each other, so it was cool to have Ivan in the mix."

When he's not with his foggy friends, Rosenberg is one busy man. Currently he has a studio in Portland, and he has produced four solo albums as well as collaborations with Jason and Pharis Romero, The Breakmen, the wonderful Washington State songwriter Kevin Brown, Chris Stuart and Backcountry and Mighty Squirrel.

Rosenberg has also received kudos for songwriting and his instrumental compositions. Rosenberg and Chris Stuart were awarded the 2009 IBMA Song of the Year for co-writing *Don't Throw Mama's Flowers Away*, which was performed by Dan Paisley and the Southern Grass.

And although it hasn't made him rich, Rosenberg's music has been used in 150 TV and film scores, including some high profile shows like Oprah Winfrey's and *The Daily Show* with political satirist Jon Stewart. You never know how your music will be used. Oprah used Rosenberg's resophonic to accompany a spot about her favourite sandwich in America, and "the Kirstie Alley bikini reveal." The mind boggles. Rosenberg never saw the shows, but heard about them afterwards.

Right now he's having a hard time containing his excitement about an entry in a contest for the theme song to William Shatner's forthcoming animated series, *The Zenoids*, that he has co-written with fellow Pacific Northwest musicians Dave Keenan and Nova Devonie.

He's also working on a solo album, has plans to tour with Chris Coole in the new year, has teaching gigs lined up at a number of music camps, as well as some dates on the West Coast with the Boys.

"A six-person band is not economically viable, but neither is any bluegrass band," Rosenberg says. That hasn't changed since the golden era of bluegrass, and is unlikely to change in the next 40 years, even for those with fake country music accents.



Treasured Tracks

Rare historical field recordings of Newfoundland's rich musical heritage are now available on CDs thanks to Dr. Beverley Diamond. Jean Hewson makes an appointment with the good doctor.

work has been undertaken by academic institutions to document and preserve the traditional music of Newfoundland and Labrador. In the 1920s, song collectors Elisabeth Greenleaf and Grace Yarrow Mansfield of Vassar College visited the island, as did Cecil Sharpe's collaborator, Maude Karpeles. From the 1950s to present day, academics such as ethnomusicologist Kenneth Peacock, folklorist Ken Goldstein, and the professors and students at Memorial University's Department of Folklore have continued to conserve and study the province's oral heritage.

Vast numbers of songs, stories and dances have been amassed. While some of these pieces have been recirculated back into the community through publications and musical anthologies, much of Newfoundland and Labrador's oral heritage languishes in archives.

Enter the Research Centre for Music, Media and Place (MMAP). Founded at Memorial University in 2003 under the direction of Dr. Beverley Diamond, MMAP has been instrumental in creating links between the work of academics and the musical community. One of Diamond's first moves was to establish a community advisory group whose function was to open up the lines of communication between local musicians and the university.

"When I first came here, the thing that I heard most often from musicians was that the university had all this material given to them by the people of Newfoundland but that there wasn't very much coming back," says Diamond. "The community advisory group came up with ways that people could come forward with ideas for projects, and often they were CD projects."

In 2005, the Back On Track Archival CD series was launched with a view to making rare and currently inaccessible Newfoundland recordings available to the public. The first CD was called *It's Time for Another One*. This disc features a collection of field recordings made by folklore student Jesse Fudge in 1968 of singers from the South Coast communities of Ramea and Grole.

"The idea for this CD came from Anita Best," states Diamond. "I said to the committee, 'OK, if we're going to do a CD series, are there any important collections in the archives that you think the public would like to have out there?' Anita said she thought the Jesse Fudge collection was one that had some wonderful songs and was relatively well recorded."

The following year, MMAP released the second CD in the series

entitled Newfoundland and Labrador Folklore: A Sampler of Songs, Narrations, and Tunes. The project had started a number of years earlier as a collaboration between folklore professor Dr. Peter Narvaez and two

graduate students. While the repertoire on the first CD represents the traditional music of a specific region, the selection on the second disc includes music and stories from all over the province that had been deposited in the university's folklore and language archives.

"Peter hadn't had the time or funding to finish it, so I suggested we take it on. He and his students had already made all the selections, and we did the transcriptions. Some of the dialects were interesting," laughs Diamond.

There are truly some gems on this CD, including contributions from well-known traditional musicians Rufus Guinchard, Emile Benoit, Bernard Felix, and Minnie White, as well as many engaging tracks from lesser-known artists. It is MMAP's best-seller to date.

There are three other CDs in the Back on Track series: Saturday Nite Jamboree chronicles the weekly radio show of the same name that was carried on the Newfoundland Regional Network of the CBC from 1958-1969. Hailed as the radio version of a Newfoundland kitchen party, it featured local country, folk and traditional entertainers. From The Big Land: Music from Makkovik featuring Gerald Mitchell showcases the music of influential Labrador songwriter Gerald Mitchell, and combines tracks from albums released in the 1970s as well as more recent recordings.

Welta'q: Historic Recordings of the
Mi'kmaq was the first CD in the series
to utilize archival material from outside
Newfoundland. It draws from collections at
the Canadian Museum of

Civilization, the University of Moncton and Cape Breton University, as well as those of Memorial.

All the CDs come with brilliant booklets, ranging in length from 20 to 60 pages, which include the background history of the project, photos, and notes on the songs and the singers.

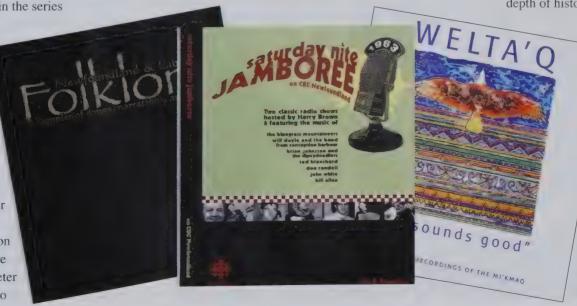
MMAP has a number of upcoming recordings in the works. Sherry Johnson, a fiddler, dancer and ethnomusicologist at York University, is spearheading *Bellows and Bows*; a Canada-wide survey of lesser-known, non-commercial fiddle and accordion music. It is a huge endeavor, involving a two-CD set and a 150-page booklet. Tom Gordon, recently retired from his position as head of the School of Music at Memorial, is working on a CD focusing on the Moravian missions in Labrador.

The research centre is also considering branching out into video. "This year myself and Kati Szego (the current director of MMAP) had the time to audit a video documentary course. We toyed with the idea of doing a series on Newfoundland accordion, and we've already started doing some experimental filming with Stan Pickett. We did a pretty nice recording at the local session at the Rocket lunchroom where we got footage of Stan and Frank Maher as well," says Diamond. The concept is still in the preliminary stages and it will be a while before there is an actual product available.

Thanks to the initiatives of MMAP, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can continue to enjoy the songs and stories of their ancestors, recorded in the settings of everyday life; and the entire world can share the depth of history, beauty, and

authenticity of one of North America's most unique oral traditions.

The Back
On Track series is available through
MMAP's
website www.
mun.ca/mmap.





Kind of Blue

With his dynamic acoustic bluesbased soul, folk and gospel, Mad Andersen has gained a ferocious reputation as a must-see performer. Still basking in the recent adulation granted his disc Coal Mining Blues, which he recorded in Woodstock with Colin Linden, Andersen pulls up a chair for a natter with Roddy Campbel!.

he lineup at the Saturday Night
Special Folk Club forms hours
before the doors open. In the soulsapping heart of a prairie winter, the sold-

out signs merit an ironclad confirmation of Matt Andersen's indisputable appeal. And the ardent Calgary punters, average age, at a guess, 55, want an up-close-and-personal seat for the action.

Andersen comes across as some madcap theatrical combination of Meat Loaf and a cocky, kinetic, acoustic edition of Alvin Lee of Ten Years After—all whiplashed hair and nimble fingers. And there's that voice, too, distinctively commanding at its essence yet feverishly edging closer to mimicking classic Joe Cocker when it stretches from blues to ballads. Such worthy attributes easily earn the big man a standing ovation. Not to mention a huge vote of national fan approval at the recent

Maple Blues Awards, where he landed the Male Vocalist, Acoustic Act, and Entertainer of the Year accolades.

"I was really thrilled. The Canadian blues industry is a really close-knit family. It's really cool to be a part of that whole scene and to be recognized by your peers," says Andersen backstage prior to the gig.

As busy as a wasp in the wind, he has released three albums—Coal Mining Blues, Spirit of Christmas and Push Record: The Banff Sessions—in the past 12 months. The latter sees him reunite with harmonica virtuoso Mike Stevens. The pair released Piggyback in 2009. The Banff Sessions, as the title implies, took shape at the impressive Banff Centre in the Canadian Rockies, February 2011.

Kurt Bagnel, manager of presentations there, offered Andersen an all-expenses-paid, two-week artist residency. All he had to do was show up. There were no expectations. A carefree fortnight at an idyllic mountain retreat with a state-of-the-art recording studio, though, might just stir his creativity. That was the hope, at least. And when Bagnel suggested Andersen invite a guest, without hesitation he called Stevens.

"I'm not really one for playing with a band, having rehearsals and that kind of stuff," says Andersen. "I like to be more spontaneous. And Mike is fantastic for that. He's never really had to work at it. I can go anywhere and he's right there or ahead of me so he's a lot of fun to play with."

As adaptable as an egg, Stevens has made more than 300 appearances at the Grand Ole Opry and has performed with such celebrated bluegrass giants as Bill Monroe, Jim and Jesse and the Virginia Boys and The Lewis Family. The late 'King of Country,' Roy Acuff, considered himself a fan. Stevens initially met Andersen at the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals in Ottawa. Neither had a clue of what might emerge from Banff. Everything evolved from instinct.

"We didn't know what was going to happen until we got there," says Andersen. We thought we'd get a few songs written or whatever. We didn't have a goal of getting an album out. Once we got on a roll, four or five days in, we booked the studio time."

And that's when things got really interesting. The in-house engineer turned out to be David Gleeson, whose credits include

Michael Jackson, Pink Floyd, Pearl Jam, Randy Newman and ... erm ... Celine Dion, with whom he earned a Grammy.

"He's the kind of guy we couldn't afford otherwise. Or, he might not have returned our phone calls," laughs Andersen. "He was amazing to work with. He really knew his stuff."

Like its predecessor *Piggyback*, *The Banff Sessions* offers a spartan assortment of various blues stylings, instrumentals, and original songs. Fascinatingly enough, on both discs the standout out tracks—*Last Letter Home* and *Going Home*—deal with the same moving topic: the tragic circumstances of the modern Canadian soldier.

The latter appears on their initial recording.

"Mike was in Fredericton, New Brunswick, where the soldiers from [CFB] Gagetown come home from overseas. And there was a family waiting for the plane. And he saw the casket come off and the whole sad scene going down. He started writing down the words. He had them for two or three years. When we got together to do *Piggyback* I was just strumming chords to get some ideas and Mike went off to his room and came back with these words and started doing this spoken word. I just strummed the chords. It sounded pretty powerful that way.

"Last Letter Home was, again, an idea of a guy being on the front line, sending letters home. He figured by the time everybody got them he'd probably be gone. It has a solemn kind of message, I guess."

Certainly. But one more than offset by the hilarious *Canadian Winter Blues* and its Stompin' Tom Connor brand of lyrical cornball. Cue: "I got my truck stuck / In Tuktoyaktuk / I left my left boot / but I found a mukluk / I lost my tuque down on Portage and Main / And I'll stay inside until it's summer again".

"In Banff in February with all that gorgeous snow scenes, we picked up on things that were distinctly part of a Canadian winter for us—mukluks, Portage and Main and that kind of stuff that you have to live here to get. It's just a fun tune where we're poking ourselves.

"I never really enjoy shows where people are all tense; people can still enjoy music with heavy moments but you contrast that with some lighter ones, too. I tend to find the humor in a lot of things that I experi-

ence and I put them in the show."

Indeed, in the middle of a blues lick in Calgary he includes a snatch from the theme for *The Pink Panther*. And he memorably mimics the Cookie Monster from *Sesame Street* singing the blues. Hilarious, too, is his self-deprecating humour on *One Size Never Fits*, on which he sings about his "6' 2", 400 pounds" of a frame: "*I've been accused of letting myself go / But that don't get me down / 'cause I'm warm in the winter / Cool shade in the summer / <i>I'm easy to be found*." A very funny man.

If the Banff Sessions and Piggyback were built on a stripped down spontaneity and improvisation, Andersen's approach to Coal Mining Blues proved a whole different kettle of cucumbers. Recorded at Levon Helm's studio in Woodstock, NY, and released last September to unanimous national acclaim, it features a crack team of veteran session musicians that included Helm's former Band mate, Garth Hudson. And more significantly, Andersen had the wherewithal to recruit his hero, Colin Linden, as producer. Linden, a founder member of Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, includes T Bone Burnett, Lucinda Williams, Emmylou Harris and Bruce Cockburn amongst his credits.

"A lot of the stuff I'd done before was pretty grassroots, this was jumping up to the next level," Andersen says. "I wanted a world-class producer on this one. I talked a lot to Colin about what I wanted and made

sure he was comfortable with that. I knew Colin would be up for a great-sounding album without killing the performance in the studio and taking away the vibe. That's what we did, we just played like a band at rehearsal. They were the guys I had played with over the years, my dream team. They were my first call and I was lucky enough to get them for the album."

The dream team consisted largely of drummer Geoff Arsenault (Mary Jane Lamond, Ray Bonneville ...), bass player Dennis Pendrith (Bruce Cockburn, Gordon Lightfoot ...), keyboard player John Sheard (Ian & Sylvia, Rita Coolidge ...) and acoustic and electric guitarist Colin Linden.

Sheard, Pendrith and Andersen met while touring with the *The Vinyl Café*—the popular live CBC Radio program hosted by Stuart McLean. It has a massive fan base and helped spread interest in Andersen's career. For instance, this past Christmas the tour he did with McLean attracted 50,000 fans.

"It helped me get my face in front of a lot of people who otherwise might never have heard of me," Andersen concedes.

Seasonal tours with *The Vinyl Café* also inspired *The Spirit of Christmas*. For that project, he again recruited Sheard and Pendrith and added Dave Gunning as porducer.

"Christmas is one of my favourite times," says Andersen. "I didn't want to do all of the classics that have been done so much before, but there are some that I've always loved, that I had to put on there. I wrote



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some new songs and recorded one by Rick Fines and one by Chris Whitely."

Ah yes ... so where we? Right, Coal Mining Blues.

Garth Hudson's presence in the studio, of course, proved a thrill for all asunder. Apparently, though, he works by his own definition of a time schedule, inadvertently showing up hours late for his session. Still, who was going to grumble?

"Colin's sitting across from me and Garth's maybe 10 feet away playing the accordion. That was really cool, you know. He brought exactly what we thought he'd do in the studio and nailed it right off the bat. It sounded fantastic. It sounded right like Garth. So it was like a pat on my own back getting to do that, playing with these guys—two of my heroes. It was really cool."

While Hudson played accordion on the gorgeous *Home Sweet Home*, Levon Helm, unfortunately, was nowhere to be seen. His impressive studio, incidentally, duplicates as the home of his Midnight Ramble Sessions—a concert series that attracts such guests as Steve Earle, Jackson Browne and Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys. The buzz about these live shows sparked Andersen's interest in using Helm's studio.

"I had heard so much about it through the Midnight Ramble Sessions that he does. I liked the idea of going away from home to work so I could focus in on the album. When we got there the vibe was amazing. It was exactly what I wanted. It's the most creative space I've ever been in. You could tell it was made by musicians for musicians. The acoustics were great."

By the way, Hudson's tardiness inadvertently produced one of the album's highlights: an emotional acoustic cover of Willie P. Bennett's *Willie's Diamond Joe*. To kill time waiting for the man, Linden and Andersen swapped songs. He had first heard *Willie's Diamond Joe* at the Trout Forest festival in northern Ontario. While it stuck in his head, he could only remember part of it. Well, nobody knows Bennett's songs better than Colin Linden.

"It turned out Blackie & The Rodeo Kings had recorded it. Colin knew Willie P. really well. So he just wrote out the words for me and we sat with one mic between us and tracked it."

Willie's Diamond Joe is one of two impressive covers on Coal Mining Blues, the other being Charlie Rich's evergreen Feel Like Going Home.

"The first time I heard that song was Mark Knopfler's band, The Notting Hillbillies. When I first started playing six, seven years ago, I covered it a couple of times and then put it on the shelf and completely forgot about it. Then I was listening to Holger Petersen's [CBC Radio program] Saturday Night Blues on the road one night and he played Charlie Rich's version of it sitting at the piano and I kind of fell in love with it all over again. Being on the road with The Vinyl Café, I mentioned that one to John Sheard and he figured out the piano part. I thought of putting it on the album. Since John was playing I thought it was a good time to do it."

Still, *Coal Mining Blues* proves Andersen an eclectic songwriter of considerable merit. The title track, in particular, shows a distinct lyrical maturity that stretches far beyond the usual amorous blues clichés. While it pays tribute to Cape Breton's coal miners, it does so with a telling astute-

ness—"I've got the roar of a lion, but the breath of a mouse"—that cuts to the heart of the consequences associated with such demanding labour.

"That lifestyle, I have a lot of respect for it. It struck a chord with me. The personal sacrifice to provide for a family is massive. These guys pretty much gave up their lungs for taking care of things."

Matt Andersen was born in Bairdsville, NB, on the 20th of October, 1980, the youngest of three boys. His older brothers bought rock albums, his parents gospel and country records, so there was always music around the house. And Matt soaked it all up. His grandfather, too, played dance tunes on the fiddle and tried to teach his grandson. But Matt grew discouraged with his lack of progress. He then opted for the guitar—an instrument he could sing along to.

After graduating from high school at 17, Andersen left New Brunswick to take a one-year course at the Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology in London. On weekends he hung out at clubs like The Scot's Corner and Old Chicago, where he heard live blues for the first time. Then from Eric Clapton albums, he would trace its roots backwards towards the major sources.

On his return to New Brunswick, he started Stubby Fingers with close friend Dan Vallance. Great Big Sea had taken off at the time and for the sake of a gig or two Andersen forged a repertoire of old folk songs and classic rock to play in bars around the Maritimes. Vallance, however, was finding the strain of a full-time job and playing music too much to bear and so Stubby Fingers called it a day without ever recording.

Undeterred, Andersen recruited Ray Haines to form Flat Top in 2002. They would add a bass player and drummer when needed. But this combo had the shelf life of brie. Andersen was the only one committed to playing full time and Flat Top suffered the same fate as Stubby Fingers.

"Being weekend warriors you can only travel so far. I wanted to do more—travel and not just have to worry about playing Friday and Saturday gigs. I wanted to work full time at it so I just decided to head out on my own and focus on getting out of bars and into the folk clubs. I wanted a taste for that."

Subsequently he recorded the EP *One*Size Never Fits (2002) Solo At Session
(2004) and Live at Liberty House (2005).

All three discs no longer exist. He describes them now as rudimentary recordings, one-time calling cards of sorts. However, the best of these first two recordings he retooled and resurrected for the impressive *Second Time Around* (2007). Almost simultaneously, Andersen performed a showcase at the Atlantic Film Festival where producer Paul Milner approached him after the gig and offered to produce his next album. Milner's credits include Keith Richards and Robert Palmer.

"[Milner] ... came up to me after and said if you want to make a blues album give me a call. It's one of these conversations that you get a lot of but this one actually had some weight to it. I gave Paul a call the next time I was ready to record."

Milner then booked Chapel Hill recording studio in Lincoln, England, for a week and hired such top-class musicians as drummer Henry Spinetti (Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Paul McCartney, ...) and keyboard player Dan Cutrona (Joe Cocker, Al Green, The Bee Gees, Donna Summer, ...). The resulting album, *Something In Between* (2008), marked a huge leap forward for Andersen. Impeccably produced and arranged, it stretches from soul and gospel swaddled in strings and choirs to meat-and-potatoes rhythm and blues. The gorgeous ballad *Bold and Beaten*, though, deserves particular reverence.

"I was on the road with a friend, Ross Neilsen. He had just broken up with his girlfriend at the time so he was in a pretty good frame of mind for writing a song. The song's about being on the road and the sacrifices you make for true love. That's where that one came from."

Now performing about 150 gigs a year, Andersen, with the help of his *Vinyl Café* appearances, was slowly building a significant following. With friends like Mike Stevens, Andersen would record *Live from the Phoenix Theatre* in Saint John, NB, in 2009, a disc he describes as an updated version of his second recording *Solo At Session*.

A year later he was the toast of Fredericton, NB. The Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival there sponsored him to participate in the International Blues Challenge on famed Beale Street in Memphis, TN. Competing against blues musician from around the world, he won as Best Solo/Duet Artist—the first Canadian to do so. Part of his prize included a week of gigs on a Caribbean Blues Cruise opening every night for the likes of Taj Mahal, Bettye LaVette and Shemekia Copeland. Andersen obviously held his own as they asked him back this year.

Such is his status now on the home front that plans are underway to book him into one of the most prestigious venues in the country: Toronto's Massey Hall.

"That's kind of a goal for my manager," says Andersen. "He wants to get that one under his belt. It's a little validation for him. It'll be a ways down the road but, yeah, I'd love to play Massey Hall. I was lucky enough to play there last year opening for Buddy Guy. I finally got to see what the fuss is all about. It has a vibe, that's for sure."



Danny Thompson

The Penguin Eggs Interview



n Danny Thompson jargon, he's a legend in his own lunchtime.
A stand-up bass player is a rare enough beast in modern times and Thompson is unique not only in his playing style but the breadth of music he has seamlessly engaged during the course of a long and colourful career that's seen him play with various jazz and blues greats, tour with Roy Orbison and The Beatles, help found folk-jazz supergroup Pentangle and forge an influential and groundbreaking partner-

ship with the late John Martyn. Only last year he was playing sessions with Kate Bush and having a ball onstage with The Who. An irrepressible Londoner, he is also fiercely funny and can talk for England...Questions by Colin Irwin.

What was it that drew you to the bass?

From the age of 14 I was always going to be a bass player. I was a big fan of New Orleans jazz, particularly (clarinettist) George Lewis. The bass player was

Alcide (Slow Drag) Pavageau and I loved the bass sound...or it may just have been his name. But the big thing about that was the trombonist, Jim Robinson. Now when people talk about my style, they talk about my melodic, singing-over-the-top, counter-melodic style...it's not something I'm consciously aware of but it's probably something to do with all those formative years listening to the trombonist Jim Robinson soaring over the melodies.

You do have a distinctive style...

People ask me about that and I say, 'Oh, it's to do with this and that, it's to do with posture and your left arm and all the rest'...but I walked into a bass shop the other day and had a bit of a play on a few basses, as you do. And the old boy in there was grinning at me and I said, 'Are you grinning because you know I'm not an academic and I'm a bit of a hooligan?'. He said, 'No, I just know I'm listening to somebody who started playing without an amplifier'. And I went DING! Yes. Alcide (Slow Drag) Pavageau never had an amplifier and the beat was the essential thing rather than nowadays it's the harmony and the melodic and the choice of notes.

Didn't you start your career playing in strip clubs?

That was when I was 16. Tubby Hayes and other great London jazzers would come to the strip club after the strippers and dirty raincoat brigade had gone home at 1am and we'd play through the night to about 7am. Wonderful times. He'd say to me 'Some of the notes you play hurt my eyes...but you got great time and you really swing and that's everything. You can always learn the notes but if you haven't got that swing and that timing you are wasting your time'.

Playing regularly at Ronnie Scott's [jazz club in London] around that time must have been important, too...



I played with some amazing people there; Phil Seamen, Jackie Dougan. All these great drummers. And be heard...there were plenty of invisible bass players around in clubs. But you could hear me! Before that, when I was 12, 13 or 14 I spent a lot of time listening to Alan Lomax's programs on Voice of America going round penitentiaries and chain gangs. I was absolutely addicted to that when all the other kids were listening to Tommy Steele. I was really into black music, Big Bill Broonzy and all that. The first record I ever bought was Sonny Terry's Train Blues. We used to sit around in school and people would be saying, 'I'm gonna be a doctor, I'm gonna be a lawyer, I'm gonna be this, I'm gonna be that'. And there's me, this snotty-nosed South London kid saying, 'I'm gonna be a double bass player!'. You've got to be a lunatic, haven't you? But when I got hold of a bass, I went BING! And it's the bass I've got now. Young people say to me now, 'I want to be a famous producer or a famous songwriter or a famous guitarist' but when I was 14 or 15 the idea of being famous never even entered my head. The only people who went into recording studios were Frankie Laine and Doris Day and the idea of making a recording was impossible for me to perceive. I just wanted to play the bass and I wanted to replace the bass player with Ken Colyer's band, Big Ron Ward. That was my ambition... to be in Ken Colyer's band.

Did electric bass never appeal to you?

I'll tell you what happened. I'd just come out of the army and was broke. I'd been called up and spent two years in Malaysia and when I came out I was totally skint. Somebody said, 'There's a job for a bass player, you're a bass player, aren't you? It's with a bloke called Roy Orbison'. I said, 'I don't know him'. And the bloke said, 'It's 40 guid a week for a six-week tour'. And I said, 'Fantastic!'. That was 1963. And they said I had to play electric bass, which I hadn't done before. So they got me an electric bass. I must have been awful, but I ended up doing three tours with Orbison and The Beatles were supporting. And then they had a hit and they changed Orbison to the support.

Did you have lots of screaming girls in the audience?

Yeah, you couldn't hear music, you couldn't hear anything. You could have been playing God Save the Queen, nobody would have known any different.

What was The Big O like then?

He was fantastic. He was bigger than Presley at the time! I loved the man. I'd come out of the army, a complete unknown dork, but I got on really well with him. Lovely man. People sometimes ask if I've ever played electric bass and I say, 'Once-with Roy Orbison. That'll do!'. And when they ask if I've ever played bluegrass, I say, 'Once-with Bela Fleck, Sam Bush, Jerry Douglas. That'll do!'. 'Have you ever played blues?'. 'Yes—with Joe Williams, Little Walter'.... When I think about it, it's ridiculous. I played with Art Farmer, Freddie Hubbard, Jon Hendricks, plus Stan Tracey's quartet, Tubby Hayes...at one time I was with Alexis Korner, Pentangle and the Tubby Hayes Quartet at the same time and doing Marianne Faithfull albums. It's stupid. How was that possible?

How did Pentangle fit into all this?

I've never had any musical prejudices. Whether it's blues or jazz or folk or what, I don't care. I was doing a TV show with Alexis Korner, and John Renbourn happened to be there playing guitar with Dorris Henderson and in the tea break we got together and he said he was doing this

stuff at the Horseshoe pub with another guitarist called Bert Jansch, if I fancied coming down. So I did and then I got the drummer Terry Cox to come along and Jacqui McShee became the singer and that was how Pentangle started. At no time did I think of it as being particularly innovative, but it was an important step in my musical education. I was working at Ronnie Scott's at the time and some of the jazz people said, 'How can you play with those folk people? What about the solos?'. And I said, 'Solos is ALL I do!'. It was good, although it wasn't so happy afterwards when we were ripped off by the record company and it came to a sour end.

And John Martyn?

We'd done five albums with Pentangle and been all round the world and the record company wanted us to do another album with a considerable advance, but I said that's it, I'm out of here. Bert wanted to do one last album and I said if we're doing it just for the advance then it's definitely time to chuck it in. Then I ran into John Martyn and the rest is history. At the start we were getting £30 a night if we were lucky but it's what you put into it that counts and we bounced off each other and were doing something nobody else was doing and I loved it.

You were pretty wild, by all accounts...

We did a lot of raving but I know plumbers and builders who've done just as much raving and we were lucky we didn't dam-





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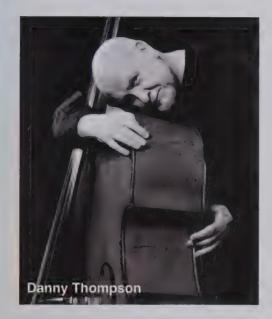
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age ourselves as much as some people.

The recent death of your great Pentangle colleague Bert Jansch must have hit you hard...

Yes, it's very sad. He was a real warrior because he'd been ill for years but he never complained. He never ever said, 'I don't feel well'. And what was also terrible was that his wife died seven weeks later.

And before that you had to contend with the loss of John Martyn...

John...I'm still not over it. When people used to say, 'I've lost this, I've lost that', I'd think yes, but that's what life is, we're in, we're out. But when John died it made me really aware of what grief is. It's still with me. I really miss him. I miss the three o'clock in the morning phone calls. The phone would go and there'd be John going (he adopts Martyn's gruff Scottish accent) 'You English bastard...I love you, man'. And I'd say, 'If you love me why are you waking me up at bloody three o'clock in the morning?'. And he'd say, 'Don't be such an English bastard...'. I miss all that. Even though he went off and did his electric thing, he was always there.

Do you believe in the afterlife?

I do. I was brought up in a Catholic Jesuit college, which can put you off it, but I used to ask questions all the time and never really got answers. I looked at Taoism and Buddhism...not in a desperate search for

a raft to travel on but I thought there's got to be something or nothing - and atheists don't get a lot of holidays so I can't be an atheist. So then I discovered Islam. which was never mentioned at school. It was always pictures of Saracens chopping babies' heads off. All these bearded geezers on horseback, so it was taboo. But I looked at it and thought it was telling me what I'd been asking. It was very direct, so that convinced me that was the way to go. My problem now is Muslims are killing each other, Christians are killing each other and all these God-fearing people are killing each other. I still retain my belief but I realize people are the problem and the way they interpret things to suit their lifestyle.

You played with Nick Drake, too, on his *Five Leaves Left* album. Was he this tragic figure everyone assumes?

Well, he was a very fragile bloke. John liked him a lot but I used to think he needed a kick up the arse. They said he was going through this terrible depression but I've been through depression and the last thing you need is to go into the studio with a 30-piece orchestra. I think it was inverted snobbery on my part because he was posh but we overcame that and enjoyed each other's company. He'd come up to my house in Suffolk and I tried bullying, patronizing and being really friendly just to try and shake him out of it but it didn't work. But I thought his stuff was fantastic.

You're still as busy as ever...

Yeah. I did some gigs last year with The Who playing acoustic. I was standing there on stage with Townshend and Daltrey and I'm playing *Pinball Wizard* and all these Who hits. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine I'd ever be doing anything like that. Tom Jones maybe, but not The Who.

And you worked with Kate Bush's last year, too—what was she like?

She's great. There are no frills with her; she's very direct and knows exactly what she wants. She has this picture in her head and away you go. She has no time for what the business wants, she does it because it's what she wants to do. She has so much integrity.

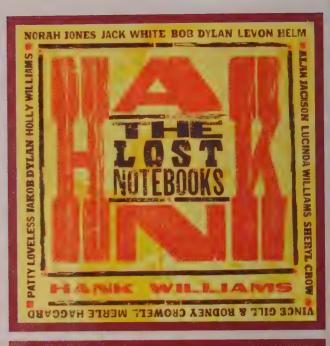
No thought of retirement then?

No. I had a stroke in 1997 and I was blind and paralyzed and couldn't even drink water, and they thought I'd had it. But at no time did I think, 'Poor me.' The only thing I cared about was would I be able to play again? The idea of not being able to play was worse than any disability. As soon as I got home I went to the bass and everything was OK. I have to keep my chops in and work is the only way to do that because I'm a lazy geezer. My biggest kick is being onstage. Not to impress audiences or other people but to give myself satisfaction. I still have my childhood enthusiasm about it all.





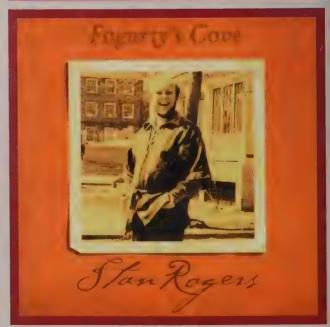












Arguably the most influential folk album ever released in Canada, *Fogarty's Cove*. Everything essential that came before it was part of a folk legacy that evolved elsewhere.

— Stan Rogers, Page 59

This is a work of great purity and beauty that encourages quiet reflection and makes listening intently a most rewarding experience.

- Corrina Hewat, Page 63





Kate Reid

Doing It for the Chicks (Independent)

The third CD from Kate Reid begins with a bang by telling the fabulous story-in-song of Captain Cupcake. He drives a tug boat and is a total roughneck cross-dresser who hangs out in a sketchy Nanaimo bar, where he successfully proposes marriage to the hot server. That's just for starters.

Then we are off on the usual Kate Reid emotional rollercoaster ride, from chuckles at the nuttiness of My Baby's In the Beer Tent Again and the sly humour of Closet Femme to the awe of Crying Holy and the indignation of Revolution. Although she is an out-and-out lesbian, and writes very much from that perspective, her material has a much broader appeal because it concerns universal issues such as social justice, human unity, tolerance, justice and love. Oh, and just in case it is ever forgotten, the tunes are great and she is a brilliant singer as well. Stylistically there's a stronger country-folk and bluegrass influence compared with her two previous releases.

There is an evident arc of development running through all three of her CDs, which traces her growth from *Comin' Alive*, as she emerged from her protective shell, to *I'm Just Warming Up*, where she began to flex her muscles, to the all out vibrancy, brazen-cheeked satire and righteous biting polemic that runs in a rich vein throughout *Doing It for the Chicks*.

The cover wittily portrays
Kate surrounded by adoring
women, in a tongue-in-cheek
parody of those dreadful
gangsta rap album covers. It's
what's inside that really counts,
however—and what's inside is
very good indeed.

- By Tim Readman

Leon Rosselson

The World Turned Upside Down (Fuse Records/PM Press)

It is challenging to review a four-CD set containing just shy of five hours of music, 72 songs, covering 50 years of creative work in the space I have been given. There are so many great songs about important things, so many articulate commentaries on people and things, issues and events that you could

easily write a book based on the songs. Happily, Leon Rosselson did just that—65 pages of notes that come with the CDs. Between the songs and the book about them, we get a history of the politics and culture of the last five decades and, to a degree, five centuries, written by an incisive analyst of current affairs and mores. Leon Rosselson is the finest songwriter addressing political and social issues in the English language.

He writes against war, about the struggle to remain human in an inhuman world, and the crisis of the artist faced with a society where art is not respected or rewarded. He denounces the treason and perfidy of those who claim to lead the struggle for a better world and celebrates the ones who kept and keep the faith, fighting against all odds, from the Diggers to William Morris to secular Jewish radicals today.

He writes for and about children and adults without patronizing either. He does so with wit, humour, anger and skill. These songs will make you laugh, cry, think and act—the measure of a great artist. Buy this CD! You need it!

- By Gary Cristall

Tom Lewis and QFTRY

Poles Apart Too – The Song Goes On
(Self-Propelled Music)

It's been 25 years since I first heard of Tom Lewis through his first album, *Surfacing*. Then, fresh out of a 25-year stint in the British Navy and a new Canadian, he brought a breath of fresh air to folk music with a collection of shanties both traditional and new.

He hasn't disappointed since and with *Poles Apart Too—The Song Goes On* he reunites with QFTRY, a five-piece band from Poland, with whom he did a



terrific album 10 years ago. No surprises here—lusty male voices with British and Polish accents belting out sea-themed shanties and songs, some a cappella, some with tasteful arrangements by QFTRY.

And that's great because sometimes you don't want surprises, just work extremely well done by masters of their professions. I love their version of the traditional shanty *Passage to Grimsby* and the reprise of *The Last Shanty*, the first song Tom ever wrote that appeared on that first album so many years go.

So, when was the last time you went to sea? If never, or not for a long time, join Tom and QFTRY for a voyage I guarantee you'll truly enjoy. Everyone should have at least one Tom Lewis record in their possession or their music collection is incomplete. This one is a good'un to start with.

- By les siemieniuk

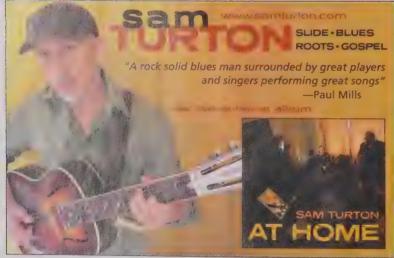
Fred Eaglesmith

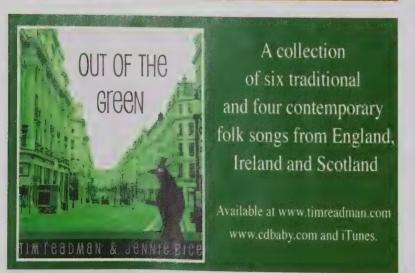
6 Volts (Sweetwater Music)

Like Neil Young, Fred
Eaglesmith follows his muse
wherever it may go, and the
only thing you can know for
sure when a new album by the
Ontario singer/songwriter is announced is that you'll have no
idea what it will sound like.

From country-rock to bluegrass, gospel to spooky, elec-







tronically treated folk, even a splash of Latin inflected '50s rock'n'roll in 2010's *Cha Cha Cha*, he wanders with a will across a varied musical landscape.

Eaglesmith gets back to alt-country basics with 6 Volts, and while the results aren't quite as beguiling as classic albums like Dusty he's still able to pull out enough killer songs to make this an essential purchase. Like Johnny Cash, where he takes a shot at latter-day fans of the country icon; the murder ballad Katie; and Stars, his gentle tip of the hat to deceased friend and longtime former mandolin player Willie P. Bennett.

New mandolinist and banjo player Mike Zinger has the uncomfortable task of filling in for a legend but along with perennial Eaglesmith pedal steel guitarist Roger Marin, and a few others from his touring band, he does just fine. As does Fred, who sings at his croaking best throughout.

- By Tom Murray

First Aid Kit

The Lion's Roar (Wichita Recordings)

The Swedish Soderberg sisters first blew minds with an unaffected YouTube cover of Fleet Foxes' Tiger Mountain Peasant song back in 2008, owning the song so thoroughly that you almost had to question the authorship. Or their age, since they were teenagers locking into some very adult sentiments, singing wounds so deep and ancient the hair stood up on the back of your neck. Despite being instantly taken up by a range of hipper-than-hip indie stars like Bright Eyes, The Knife and the Foxes themselves,

First Aid Kit have kept their preternatural self-possession two albums into their career.

The Lion's Roar sees a little country music thrown into the folk mix, along with homage to musical antecedents (Emmylou); it's not quite as stark as you might like at times but producer Mike Mogis thankfully keeps the accompaniment to (mostly) pedal guitar swells and touches of cello and violins, setting those gorgeous, thrilling harmonies to the fore, except on the rollicking closer King of the World, which features Bright Eyes himself on a guest vocal.

- By Tom Murray

Steve Gates

A Bee in Her Mouth (Black Guillemot Music)

Halifax singer/songwriter
Steve Gates has already
made a minor splash on
the East Coast as one-fifth
of Caledonia, a sprawling,
musically uncategorizable
collective, but it's as a solo
artist that he appears to
be taking off. His second
release (after last October's
Hello Jesus EP) has Gates
keeping the sound raw and
simple, a true kitchen recording if there ever was one.

It's a sombre, finger-picked affair with scores of guest stars, including Jenn Grant, Dan Ledwell and Rose Cousins, and at no point does it feel thrown together. Gates's storytelling is strong and the instrumental touches (clarinet, pedal steel, various strings) are subtle; they never call attention to themselves. There's not a weak one in the bunch but Down To the River and Godforsaken stand out as tracks that exemplify his wry, ruminative lyrical perspective.

- By Tom Murray

lan Foster

The Evening Light (Independent)

This is the first I've heard of Ian Foster. It seems, despite technology, this country is still big enough for someone to make a splash in Europe, Newfoundland, and the Maritmes and still be relatively unheard of out here in the west of Canada.

Well, spread the word—Ian Foster is a good'un. Good songs, good playing, good arrangements, good singing ... the whole package. A Large Crowd Gathers for the Deceased Jeff Elliot's Encore Performance is a great title and a great song.

Although he seems square in the middle of the definition of singer/songwriter—a boy with a guitar—I love the way he sweetens up the sounds with cello, banjo, violin and numerous other odd and lovely touches to go along with his accomplished guitar playing.

Ian Foster is a lovely discovery for me. *The Evening Light* is a keeper. Check it out.

- By les siemieniuk

Minor Empire

Second Nature (World Trip Records)

Second Nature by Toronto band Minor Empire is an intriguing mix of Middle Eastern rhythms, instruments and maqams, blended with electric guitar stings and groaning bass lines. The production quality is a real pleasure—very clean. What could have been a soup of instruments and timbres is handled skillfully by Ozan Boz, who also arranges and plays electric guitar. Each instrument stands well-delineated, given its own space in the mix.

Most of the compositions are based on traditional Turkish folk tunes but leader Boz speaks true when he says that the Turkish and Western music "coexist together while keeping their original shapes".

These are delightful sounds: lightning runs on the kanun (hammered dulcimer) spun out by Didem Basar; peppery shots of percussion (darbuka and bendir) from Debashis Sinha, a founder of Autorickshaw; earthy ringing of the oud, played by virtuoso Ismail Fencioglu. Buzzing bass and electric guitar weave seamlessly with the Middle Eastern instruments. Haunting vocals by Ozgu Ozma, alternately sultry and sweet, draw us in ever more deeply.

A very fine debut. Could the next album have some notes about the lyrics' meaning?

- By Lark Clark

Mighty Popo

Gakondo (Borealis Records)

A real change and artistic breakthrough for Popo Murigande, better known as Mighty Popo. He is best known for his Afropop and reggae recordings, and work as a member of the African Guitar Summit. On his latest recording, *Gakondo* (which translates as origins or tradition), he rediscovers his musical heritage in his native Rwanda, going back to the music of the Royal Court and the traditional sounds of the wooden trough zither, the





Sung entirely in Kinyarwanda, Rwanda's only indigenous language, Popo adapts traditional songs and writes new originals based on inanga melodies. The music is acoustic. with beautiful tunes and vocals, often very subtle yet engaging. Mighty Popo's usual backing musicians, Kofi Ackah on percussion and Aron Niyitunga, support him well. He is also joined on four songs with B.C. musicians Doug Cox on slide guitar, and John Reischman on mandolin, and their acoustic instruments mix well with this traditional side of Popo. Highly recommended.

- By Jonathan Kertzer

John K Sampson

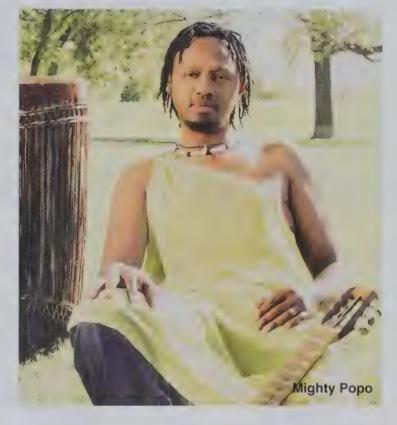
Provincial (Anti-)

This solo effort from The Weakerthans front man, John K Sampson, aptly entitled *Provincial*, has been keenly anticipated by me. I've been a longtime appreciator of John's work and have looked forward to new stuff even as I revelled in the experience of the old.

Samson continues to write poetic lyrics that at first listen seem to weigh a pound but upon further listening actually weigh five pounds. He has a gift of making the provincial and seemingly mundane universal and profound, illustrated by song topics such as finishing a master's thesis, an affair between school teachers in *The Last And*, and a night drive out of a city centre in *Heart of the Continent*.

His muse has always been Winnipeg, MN, and as someone who spent the first half of his life growing up there, perhaps there is an extra layer of pleasure in hearing the names and descriptions of a familiar unique geography and social ethos. But you need not know any of the details a local knows to appreciate the emotions and thoughts roiled up by Sampson's lovely, sparse, yet dense lyrics.

Musically, you can tell he was a Weakerthan, but there is enough new and interesting to put his own stamp on these songs, especially on an achingly gorgeous duet with



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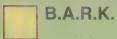
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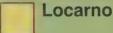
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- Holger Petersen, CBC Radio (Saturday Night Blues)











Kate Reid

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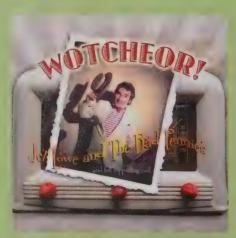
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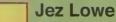
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his wife, Christine Fellows, on *Taps Reversed*.

Provincial is a terrific record.

- By les siemieniuk

Brandon Isaak

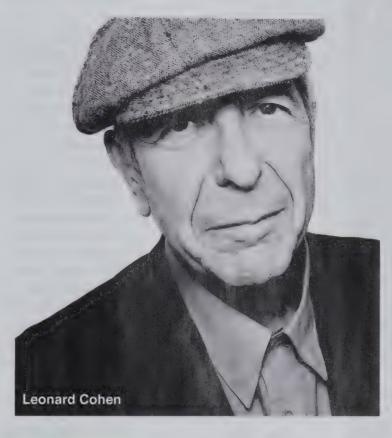
Bluesman's Plea (Independent)

Fans of Vancouver's Twisters know of Brandon Isaak's powerful contributions to this band's hard-swingin' definition of blues - and it's for this reason alone that Bluesman's Plea demands added attention, if not a degree of shock. Isaak, ably assisted by his brother, Chris, in their Yukon-based studio, has turned in one of the best traditional blues albums in years—sounding so completely comfortable in the role as to make you rethink what you thought you knew about him. Who knew?

Proof positive that life in Yukon offers more than short hours of daylight and half-price pemmican—or maybe that's why? These fresh originals roll off Isaak's lap like old dogs, his vocals an unexpected soulful match to his phenomenal guitar skills and distinct edge with a slide, as his feet gently tap out the time. His *You Gotta Pray* picks up the pace, channeling Ry Cooder's gospel attack, led by his buttery slide, augmented by Chris's support vocals.

Tell Me Why elevates the tone with loads of personality as Brandon's harp and syrupy guitar erupts into Chester Burnettlike howls and a deep feeling of loss. Contrast the vaudevillian feel of Ain't No Pleasin' You to the party-themed ode to over-drinking with Too Much Wine—a plodding, repetitive groove that reveals Brandon's soulful side. Hard to believe that this release resulted from someone asking him to do a solo show—it hadn't occurred to him. Our gain.

- By Eric Thom



Leonard Cohen

Old Ideas (Sony)

It's interesting at this stage in their respective histories to compare the work of Leonard Cohen with that of Lou Reed. The superficial similarities most notably that their lyrical prowess has always been seen to redeem the obvious limits of their vocal expressiveness have become well-worn punch lines among their detractors, with Cohen long wearing the epithet "Old Man Monotone." But where Reed's appetite for profligate artsy experimentalism churns up highly variable results—witness last year's widely derided collaboration with Metallica—Cohen seems to inhabit a well-established and rarified musical world entirely his own to which listeners are occasionally invited to return.

In this sense, *Old Ideas*—Cohen's first studio album since 2004 and the twelfth such artifact in five decades—holds almost no surprises at all.

Stale-dated instrumental flavours are rotated out, valued

collaborators (such as the tightly harmonizing Webb Sisters, who provide much vocal colour here) abide, but the austere arrangements revolve as ever around the gravity of Cohen's gravelly whisper and the profundity of his sculpted verses. But somehow, out of this unwavering consistency, fresh beauty still emerges as on the quietly astonishing *Crazy to Love You*. Let us all be grateful.

- By Scott Lingley

Reviews

Natalie MacMaster

Cape Breton Girl (Entertainment One)

Here's a wonderful traditionally based CD of real honest-togoodness Cape Breton music. Natalie's fiddle takes centre stage, as it should, while most of the backing is provided by piano with bits of guitar and a smattering of other instruments added for flavour. There are plenty of characteristically driving tunes like the opener FMedley and the lively Butcher's Jig Set. The more lyrical moments come in the form of tunes like the lovely air The Methlick Style. It's a fiddling tour de force and a fitting tribute to her marvellous Uncle Buddy, to whom this collection is dedicated. Although she is now living in Ontario, Ms. MacMaster has proved here that, although you can take the girl out of Cape Breton, you can never, ever, take Cape Breton out of this girl!

- By Tim Readman

Wilco

The Whole Love (d8pm Records)

American alternative band Wilco, with roots stemming from its alt-country lineage with members from the former Uncle Tupelo, has released its ninth album, *The Whole Love*.



CRIS CUDDY A C O U S TI C U NIT



Reviews

In 2004 Wilco won two Grammy Awards for *A Ghost Is Born*, including Best Alternative Music Album. *The Whole Love* is a 2011 Grammy nominee for Best Rock Album. This diversity in Grammy recognition shows that Wilco continues to push its musical boundaries.

The Whole Love is a solid album, with strong tracks that glide effortlessly between rock, alt-country and folk with rich instrumentation and unique arrangements.

Although released as a rock album, this upbeat, oftentimes experimental, romp cannot be pigeonholed. At times it's poppy, with I Might and Whole Love, or folk/country, with Black Moon and One Sunday Morning. Frontman Jeff Tweedy has an intense writing style that is at once captivating and unyielding. In the past it's been called dark but this album comes from Mr. Tweedy's happy place, which makes it an even more worthwhile listen.

- By Phil Harries

Arianna Gillis

Forget Me Not (Independent)

Produced by her father, David Gillis, Arianna Gillis's Forget Me Not has elements of the bratty teenage angst and selfindulgence of an early twentysomething. Musically, the album is slick, Gillis's delivery strong, but lyrically it lacks substance. All 11 tracks are co-written by the father-and-daughter team. Most memorable is the title track, Forget Me Not, featuring a hodgepodge of instrumentation—flugelhorn, cello/strings, drums, bass, electric, resonator and electric guitar.

Samuel Starr is Gillis's most creative lyrical effort. Written in a series of quotes and dialogue, she explores the afterlife. Snap Crack features a lot of doo-wah, doo-wah, doo-wahs, a foolishness that suits Gillis's youthfulness. Back on the Hill is all hand snaps and heartbreak confessions. The album closes with Oh the World, a confessional with a little instrumental tuba and ukulele flair. - Shannon Webb-Campbell

The Little Willies

For the Good Times (Milking Bull, Parlaphone, EMI Music)

Norah Jones is a country singer. All a person has to do is slide in the second project from The Little Willies to remove any doubt. The Willies is a group of musical pals from all over the U.S. featuring pop star Jones. For the Good Times pays homage to straight ahead country in a way few projects out of Nashville have for two decades. The title track comes from the pen of Kris Kristofferson and the simple treatment of this classic is a reminder of how gifted a writer Kristofferson really is. The album features material from Lefty Frizell, Loretta Lynn and Willie Nelson, among others. Jones shares the vocals on the project with Richard Julian, who brings a Lyle Lovett sensibility to his performance of Johnny Cash's Wide Open Road. Julian is good but it is

Jones who shines.

Her interpretation of Dolly Parton's *Jolene* brings the pain of the lyric right to the listener's ear. The Little Willies started almost as a lark close to 10 years ago. This, their second album, is a reminder that a pairing of good musicians and good songs is something worth spending your time on.

- By Ruth Blakely

Andrew Cronshaw

The Unbroken Surface of Snow (Cloud Valley)

More incredible, moody stuff from Mr. Cronshaw-not everyone's cup of tea but worth throwing on if you're in a restless frame of mind. Only five songs this time out; two clocking in under five minutes, two at 12, and the title track at an inspiring 34 minutes! The heart of this recording is the interplay between Cronshaw on his usual library of instruments and Armenian duduk master Tigran Aleksanyan, with contributions also from Ian Blake and Sanna Kurki-Suonio (whose name you may recognize from her days with Hedningarna).

Musically it's all fairly slow and quiet, sounding improvised much of the time (although apparently coloured by traditional tunes throughout). I wouldn't even know what to call it, and perhaps that's what the group was aiming for: music with an almost tangible sense of space and history, yet with none of the constraints that come with genre.

- By Richard Thornley

Basco

Big Basco (Independent)

I know it's a little early to pick my favourites for 2012 but I have no doubt that Basco will figure prominently. This Danish septet, with its combination of wood and brass, has produced one of the most exciting traditional folk discs I've heard for a long time. Imagine La Bottine Souriante, mostly in Danish. The relatively new band was actually started as a traditional quartet by a Scotsman-Hal Parfitt Murray—at a music academy in Denmark, and has expanded to include symphony players in the three-piece brass section, including a helicon, a tuba that wraps around the body.

They're all incredible players, despite the humorous liner notes that refer to themselves as belly dancers and part-time gigolos, and the mostly original music is heavily orchestrated, complete with tricky time signatures. And then there's that appealing combination of fiddles, accordions, citterns with the brass, that just adds to the excitement. Hopefully Basco will soon be making their big noise on this side of the Atlantic.

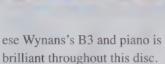
– By Mike Sadava

Joe Louis Walker

Hellfire (Alligator)

Since his debut back in '86. Joe Louis Walker has been a prolific, promising blues artist with a firm grasp on his many talents. Problem is, his best efforts have never entirely synched with the most commercially successful end of the marketplace as he's searched for a style to call his own. With 22-plus releases to his credit, Walker's career got its afterburner with '09's Between A Rock and the Blues, rocketing him back into the spotlight that some of his late '80s and '90s work had foreshadowed. His first release for Alligator finds him taking a few steps back, missing the mark that seemed so imminent.

Teamed with skilled drummer/producer Tom Hambridge (Buddy Guy, Susan Tedeschi), there's plenty of muscle displayed on *Hellfire*—possibly too much, with Walker's oft-effective vocals straining to keep up. At the same time, Walker's releases have always been about the diversity of his talents so nothing's different here—except that he's being aimed at the jugular. The title track is loud and raucous but sets up the theme nicely—Re-



Slowing things down nicely, I Won't Do That taps into
Walker's vocal strength and
finds a groove, yet he still manages to over-strangle his guitar
in a more-is-less vein. Adding
Stones-like fare to his records
is a staple and Walker simulates
Keef across Ride All Night,
complete with wailing backup
singers and plenty of lead,
while a Hambridge original
takes him down Buddy's trail a
little too closely with the suspicious lover's I'm On To You.

Walker turns up the scorch on What It's Worth to pleasing effect but the flame is soon doused by the overwrought Walker original Soldier For Jesus. Gospel's in his blood but the song is substandard, repeating the phrase 28 times (I counted/ we get it), despite great contributions from Wynans and Tommy MacDonald's soulful bass. The soul attack of I Know Why shows his potential to soften things up but his voice is so raggedy it doesn't work. All in all, he's got all the components to add the icing onto the cakehe's due. But Hellfire works too

hard to sell the consumer—and he's always done his best work when he doesn't have to.

- By Eric Thom



Harlan Pepper

Young and Old (Harlan Pepper Music)

Perhaps this Hamilton, ON, roots band chose their name because it evokes an old-fashioned, country-raised, southern person? Or maybe because they play with the unity and tightness of a single person, hence the one name? Either way, it works for their sound. The disc's title, too, is appropriate for a band of young musicians but one that plays rootsy, slightly country, slightly folky, slightly rocky material with a hint of psychedelia. They're as comfortable as an old flannel shirt with their slide guitar, banjo, and whirring keyboards but as refreshing as a glass of lemonade on a hot day with their sharp lyrics and crisp drumming.

There's no pretension here, either, just a relaxed, droll humour and a workman-like, polished sound that belies their relatively young years. Fans of The Band, Bob Dylan, or Neil







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Young will feel at home in Harlan Pepper country but so will fans of The Old 97's, Chuck Prophet, or Ron Sexsmith. The disc is a fine debut by a musically integrated unit who fit together like a plug in a socket. There isn't a single track that doesn't pull you firmly into their laid back world view.

- By Barry Hammond

Battlefield Band

Line-Up (Universal)

OK, you're perhaps not going to believe this, but Line-Up is a truly great (I mean TRULY GREAT!) Battlefield Band record, marking their first without founding member Alan Reid. The album kicks off in fine style with a take-no-prisoners set of tunes and follows with the Celtic soul of That's How Strong My Love Is (time for a Celtic cuddle, anyone?) Other highlights include the rousing A'Bhriogais Uallach (check the video on YouTube) and the darkly prophetic Lovers and Friends ("So fill up your glass to the future and past, in harmony be determined. There's more friendship poured out, in a bottle of stout, than you'll find in statute or sermon.") It's just all wonderful stuff. If you had, like me, basically written off Battlefield Band, Line-Up just might change your mind.

- By Richard Thornley

The Pines

Dark So Gold (Red House)

Frontmen for the now seven-piece Minneapolis-spawned band, Benson Ramsey (son of Bo) and David Huckfelt continue what they started five years ago. What they started was

a great band rooted in the spooky melancholy side of American roots music.

Cry Cry Crow, Rise Up and Be Lonely, Dead Feathers, Losing the Stars—just some of song titles from The Pines' new album, Dark So Gold, so yes they do continue in the vein they started but in five years have continued to grow musically in their chosen style. Dark So Gold is atmospheric and more musically lush than their earlier releases.

I have a fondness for melancholy, for songs of cold dawns and dark nights—always with a glimmer of hope—it's like life really is. The Pines are masters of this. *Dark So Gold* shimmers through the dark.

- By les siemieniuk

Various artists

The Lost Notebooks of Hank Williams (Sony)

"What's that shitkicker music you're listening to?" my dear old dad said when he caught me on Skype the other day while I was spinning The Lost Notebooks of Hank Williams. Which is to say that this all-star tribute to the King of Country Music's unrecorded lyrics—plundered from a battered briefcase he dragged around during his short time on earth—is meant to be more reverent than revelatory, setting Williams's plain-spoken hillbilly poetry in appropriately plunkety musical context.

The approach is remarkably consistent across artists as diverse as Alan Jackson, Norah Jones, Bob Dylan and Sheryl Crow, though Lucinda Williams manages to make *I'm So Happy I Found You* sound more or less like

her own.

But if Lost Notebooks seems unlikely to cast Williams's work in a new light nor usher any of these unearthed ditties into the country canon, everyone involved acquits themselves admirably—Crow even sounds incognito here—and there are some terrific highlights, from Jack White and Patty Loveless channeling some of Hank's heartsick bleat on their respective tracks, to Levon Helm's backwoods, gospel-tinged reading of You'll Never Again Be Mine, to Merle Haggard standing in for Luke the Drifter on the album closer The Sermon on the Mount, Dad would approve thoroughly.

Slide To Freedom

20,000 Miles (Northern Blues Music)

- By Scott Lingley

This is the third instalment from this intriguing collaboration between B.C.-based ace slide guitarist Doug Cox and Indian sarvik veena player Salil Bhatt, now joined by tabla player and singer Cassis Khan. This time they are joined by the Campbell Brothers sacred steel group and Americana vocalist Betty Soo. Recording at Royal Studios in Memphis, where producer Willie Mitchell recorded all of those classic Al Green songs, and working with Willie's grandson, Boo Mitchell, Slide To Freedom finds common ground with the blues and gospel-based sacred steel sound of the Campbell's.

The song selection ranges from old blues and country-based tunes from Chuck Berry and Hank Williams to Indian-based ghazals and originals, as well a '60s oldie by the Classics IV, *Spooky*, which surprisingly opens the album, with an understated vocal by Cox and great slide guitar and veena solos.



Perhaps a little uneven at times but with some real moments of instrumental genius; definitely worth a listen.

- By Jonathan Kertzer

Cam Penner

Gypsy Summer (Independent)

As sweet and soothing as a chinook, Cam Penner's Gypsy Summer adeptly pushes just about every roots-rock button there is. The Calgarian's sixth release-and the first on which he claims producer credit works as a demonstration of lessons learned and confidence earned through sustained devotion to the goddess Americana. Even standing in front of a full band, Penner evokes an effortless intimacy with his warm, unforced voice and bittersweet musings-witness the amiable album opener Driftwood (which nonetheless counsels us to expect things to get worse before they get better) and the thrumming Ghost Car, which confidently simmers along without ever overheating thanks to the restrained supporting performances by Penner's coterie of gifted collaborators, who get

to shine on the lush instrumental reprise of *Driftwood*, leaving Penner to close out the album solo on the poignant *Come As You Are*. Then, like a warm breeze, it's just gone, man.

- By Scott Lingley

Stan Rogers

Fogarty's Cove (Borealis)

Arguably the most influential folk album ever released in Canada, Fogarty's Cove.
Everything essential that came before its 1976 release was part of a folk legacy that evolved elsewhere. It not only launched Stan Rogers's career but kick started an interest in Canadian traditional themes and tunes.

And you can trace the initial

Reviews

inspiration for the likes of Great Big Sea, James Keelaghan, Rawlins Cross, Spirit of the West and such like directly to this disc. Now remastered and repackaged, familiarity has, understandably, tempered its original trailblazing bearing. The key elements, though, remain, as ever, impressive. There's that warm, rich, glorious baritone of Rogers's that dominates every track. And wonderful, wonderful songs like Forty-Five Years, Barrett's Privateers and Make and Break Harbour will be sung unto eternity. Rogers had an incredible eye for detail and really could spin a great yarn, too, as The Wreck of the Athens Queen attests. And yet Watching the Apples Grow, Giant, Finch's Complaint and The Rawdon Hills have not weathered quite as well. Nostalgia just ain't what it used to be. Whatever, 35 years on this disc remains compulsory listening for anyone with even the remotest interest in Canadian folk music.

- By Roddy Campbell

The Duke Robillard Band

Low Down and Tore Up (Stony Plain)

If Duke hasn't done it yet, it's probably not worth doing. And he's always up to something worthy in his musical mission to educate the masses (if not set the record for number of releases/lifetime). This time





out, he's time-travelling back to covering music from the late '40s and early '50s so, for most folks, it's all new to us. However, Duke transforms the semi-obscure into something tantalizing—driving us to learn more about Eddie Taylor, Tampa Red, Jimmy McCracklin or Bobby Merrill—just four of the nine artists profiled here.

Duke's ace in the hole remains the chemistry that exists between he and his band: Bruce Bears (piano), Brad Hallen (acoustic bass) and Mark Teixteira (drums)—although Matt McCabe and Sax Gordon return to help whip things into a frenzy. Duke's whatever-happens/off-the-floor approach to these lesser-known pieces is part of what makes this record work so well. At the same time, Duke's vocals are akin to pouring oilsands on a duck pond. His best voice has always been found in his fingers.

Yet the spirited run through this material is a party-maker and highlights abound. The sheer energy that lifts off Eddie Taylor's *Train Fare Home* could light a city, with thanks to Gordon and Bears, specifically. Likewise, James Crawford Jr.'s

Overboard is over the top in intoxicating fashion, lifeboats and all. Robillard stretches out on guitar with Pee Wee Crayton's Blues After Hours while Tampa Red's Let Me Play with Your Poodle is a tribute to the breed, with thanks to Bruce Bears's fearless fingers as Duke turns in a solid, animated vocal. Elmore James's Tool Bag Boogie is an instrumental that's putty in Duke's hands, as is his treatment of 12 Year Old Boy. After 50 minutes of this, you might be tore up but you'll be far from low down.

- By Eric Thom

Ani DiFranco

Which Side Are You On? (Righteous Babe

Love her or loathe her, Ani DiFranco's career spans more than two decades and is filled with instrumentation, poems, song, even a Grammy Award. The righteous babe herself has released an accusational album, Which Side Are You On?. Life Boat, with its Wurlitzer piano, bowed bass, synth bass, baritone guitar and percussion, opens the advantageous album. DiFranco has a distinct sound, with her quick words, coy delivery and rhythm; fans adore her solid delivery album after album. With 17 albums under her belt, Which Side Are You On? doesn't veer far from what one expects from DiFranco.

The title track, Which Side Are You On?—a revised version of Florence Reece's song written in 1931, popularized by Pete Seeger—is the album's rockiest track. This is a call to arms for feminism with big group vocals by the Rivertown Kids and the Roots of Music Marching Crusader.

Other album highlights include the pot-smoking serenade *J*, *Hearse*, and *Zoo*.

- By Shannon Webb-Campbell

The Toure-Raichel Collective

The Tel Aviv Session (Cumbancha)

A refreshing left turn for Vieux Farka Toure, the son of the legendary Malian guitarist Ali Farka Toure, as well as for Israeli pop star Idan Raichel. Vieux has quickly established himself as a talented singer and guitarist, with three studio recordings and a live CD. His sound has become increasingly electric and blues-rock influenced, yet here he focuses on instrumental, acoustic guitar, teaming with the Israeli star Raichel on keyboards, along with his calabash/percussionist Souleymane Kane and veteran Israeli bassist and producer Yossi Fine.

The recording is the result of a spontaneous jam session at a Tel Aviv studio, with all of the tracks written in the studio (by Toure and Raichel) and expanded upon in the moment. There is a strong elemental interplay between the musicians, and an original blend of sounds that sets the mood midway between West Africa and the Middle East.

Ethiopian-Israeli singer Cabra Casey of Raichel's band sings one song, along with a few other guests, and Toure only sings



on one song. The focus is on the overall relaxed ambiance, and the instruments talking to one another. It's a pleasurable and worthwhile conversation.

- By Jonathan Kertzer

Geoff Arsenault

Voodoo Baby Rattle (Funking Funeral Line Records)

When's the last time a drummer released a solo record? That's likely because, unless you're Gene Krupa or Karen Carpenter, you've got little else to say besides professing your skills as a time-keeper. In this instance, Geoff Arsenault is an East Coast institution, playing drums for anyone who's anybody and spreading his talents across multiple genres of music-his ancient kit an unspoken symbol of quality. Naturally, with a lifetime of making contacts in all these circles, this is a love fest for fans and select musical friends who have congregated around him for his second solo record.

His guttural, raspy vocals sit well with the rootsy cast he's assembled here—a J.J. Cale meets Lennie Cohen after a few beers. Not a lot of range but it's hardly required across the dark, crusty grooves found across these 10 originals. Arsenault seems a believer in voodoo and the spiritual connections that can result.

He's made one here—this music is far from exciting yet its lazy spirit invites you in and won't let go. The hooks are there but they're more subtle than most. Love Is Righteous stands out, as does the title track. The musical contributions of Brian Bourne and Chris Corrigan on guitar are substantial and well thought out. On this outing, Arsenault's vocals are showcased, standing out more than his drum work.

Then again, Arsenault's stock

and trade is his "invisible" drumming—he fits in without ever drawing much attention to himself, which is his edge. Three Shades of Trouble has a folk edge-this could be a Ray Bonneville track easily, while songs like Good Morning Rooster throw out Cale-esque energy, bringing the percussion forward. Likewise, Time and Money displays its spark through holding back—a technique you'll either find frustrating or satisfying, depending on your particular bent. Hound You features guitars more in the foreground and almost breaks into ... song, certainly displaying Arsenault's potential as a budding roots artist with a twist. A nice surprise albeit a supremely laidback one.

- By Eric Thom

Evalyn Parry

Spin (Outspoke Production)

With melodies that are both snappy and quaint, Evalyn Parry gives nod to the bygone era with her musical Spin, inspired by Annie Londonderry, the first female to ride around the world, in 1894. In moments reminiscent of a bicycle rendition of The Triplettes of Belleville's theme song Belleville Rendez-Vous, written by French-Canadian Benoit Charest, Two Wheeled Words: To Wield Words is a spokenword narrative spinning social change.

Spin takes us around the world and through Londonderry's epic sojourn. Instructions for Learning to Ride a Bicycle by Miss Frances Willard, 1895, is an acoustic instructional manual for the momentum needed to reach a goal, soothing waves lapping in the distance.

Political and richly creative, Amelia Bloomer Sings for Fashion Reform features Anna Friz on harmonica and Brad



Hart playing the 1982 Galaxy CCM bicycle, air pump, chains and bells. Parry's freestyle flavour shines on the 12-minute Ballad of Annie Londonderry, a catchy approach to storytelling and sticking it to the man. Names of the Chains features gang vocals, bicycle parts as noisemakers and an old-world, European-style beat. Produced by Don Kerr, the soundtrack to Spin is a fantastical journey, inspiring cyclists and brave hearts alike, chronicling an incredible woman in history by a contemporary artist whose career seems to be pedalling down the right path.

- By Shannon Webb-Campbell



Ballake Sissoko & Vincent Segal

Chamber Music (No Format/Six Degrees)

I have a longtime belief that Mande kora music is the closest form of African music to Western classical, with its deep historical repertoire, complex instrumental subtleties, and highly trained hereditary musicians. However, with its emphasis on improvisation and aural tradition, it is more often compared to American jazz and blues, to which it had a direct influence. This exquisite new partnership of kora and cello confirms my classical comparisons but also includes improvisational jazz and blues influences.

Ballake Sissoko is one of Mali's finest kora players (21string harp-lute), and is best known for his past associations with another kora great, Toumani Diabate (Ancient Strings and Kulanjan), also with Taj Mahal. He teams up here with a French cellist, Vincent Segal, who has a intriguing background, having played with everyone from Bjork to Sting. This is a beautiful coming together of two of the world's great stringed instruments, and it's a joyous collaboration, with

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two musicians at the top of their game. Two masters listening brilliantly, and performing with their hearts.

- By Jonathan Kertzer

Baba Maraire

Wona Baba Maraire (Maraire

Baba (Tendai) Maraire obviously learned very well from his mother and father. Baba's father was Dumisani Maraire, the charismatic teacher and musician who brought Shona music to Seattle in the 1960s as a teacher at the University of Washington, as well as an energetic presence at many a party. Baba's mother, Lora Chiorah-Dye, is also a huge musical presence, performing, organizing marimba and dance groups, and presenting music workshops since the 1970s.

Surrounded by traditional music from birth, Baba was called upon to perform with his parents as soon as he could walk. But growing up in America pretty much predicated setting off on his own musical path, and instead of the usual teenager's garage rock band, Baba became half of the influential avant garde hip-hop duo Shabazz Palaces. This is the musical identity that his fans his own age know. On this album, Wona Baba Maraire, Baba makes his Shona music debut.

It is a fine album. It's wonderful to hear the threads of melody weave in and out with each other, the shifting rhythms connect and separate. The

singers' harmonies, the ringing mbiras (thumb pianos), the sh-sh-sh of the hosho (gourd rattles) evoke the ebullient happiness of Zimbabwean traditional music.

As a member of the elder Maraire's generation, I listened to this album with increasing pleasure, recalling the revelation of Shona music that Dumisane Maraire imparted to an eager generation in Seattle and throughout the Pacific Northwest, spawning marimba groups active to this day throughout the region.

Standout track: track 8, *Mabasa*, pure unbridled joy as the group finds multiple directions in which to play, yet never loses their connection to one another and the song's home base.

Question: why, why, why no notes? Yes, music speaks for itself. But the very fine singers and players, obviously seasoned and deeply knowledgeable in Shona tradition, deserve recognition. And thanks.

- By Lark Clark

Matthew Barber

Matthew Barber (Outside Music)

Another veteran Toronto singer/songwriter, Matthew Barber's sixth release has a freshness and simplicity that makes it stand out from many other discs in this vein. Playing most of the tracks himself and eschewing fancy studio tricks for basic home recording and atmosphere, it has the quality of some classic '60s records or solos by the likes of Paul McCartney or Bruce Springsteen.

Barber has a melodic

musicality that surpasses basic strumming and escapes many singer/songwriter types today. Any musician would be proud to get his work down with this kind of directness and ability. According to his website, he was reading Keith Richards's biography while he was working on the disc and, while the disc might owe more to a Paul Simon song sensibility than Richards's roughness, it has that quality of talent going direct to disc without a producer's intervening that the Stones sometimes achieved.

It's as good a calling card for his talent as any disc I've heard this year. Standout tracks are Blue Forever, Man In A Movie and I Miss You When You're Gone.

- By Barry Hammond

Kate Maki

Moonshine (Confusion Unlimited)

Kate Maki's got one of those voices, both delicate and distinctive. I Lose My Mind dreamily wades along with Dale Murray's pedal steel. Brent Randall is on piano, Cuff The Duke's Paul Lowman is on upright bass, Nathan Lawr on drums, David MacKinnon on accordion and Dan Levecque on acoustic guitar. All join in on vocals. The Signal guides while Hanging On reminds listeners when things get tough to do just that.

Recorded Christmas week 2008 in Sudbury, Maki hosted a reunion in her basement on one of the coldest weeks in history under a full moon. Fuelled by good food and drink, a group of friends and veteran musicians created Moonshine. Fade To Grey embodies the lo-fi quality of the album. Moonshine offers intimacy.

Instead of just hearing, listener are invited undergroundpull up a chair, sing along, contemplate, mourn and remember together beneath the big bright moon. For anyone who feels their life's a drag, Boredom Blues is a cure in the form of a song. The most upbeat number, Fought The Cattle, illustrates Randall's piano skills. Ode says everything: all we need are a few true friends who will be with us until the end.

- By Shannon Webb-Campbell

Rose Cousins

We Have Made A Spark (Outside Music)

Something has ignited for Rose Cousins. We Have Made A Spark is a cosmic ball of light, opening with the unforgettable The Darkness. She goes into the depths of herself, singing: "you can't keep the darkness out". Produced by Zachariah Hickman, We Have Made A Spark is Cousins's boldest record to date. She's gone from a sombre folky acoustic songwriter to a bona fide force of nature with tracks such as The Shell, What I See, and All the Stars.

Go First is a stark piano ballad, an emotional journey moving through harrowing string arrangements. For the Best reminds the listener to be present, to take in the moment. It's certainly sure to inspire slow-dancing romance. The album closes with If I Should Fall Behind, a gorgeous rendition of a Bruce Springsteen classic featuring a duet with Mark Erelli.

Cousins made an accompanying documentary, If I Should Fall Behind, telling the story of the Boston music commu-



nity where Cousins created the strongest record of her career. We Have Made A Spark's limited bonus tracks revisit The Send Off, with a whiskeysoaked All the Time It Takes To Wait (Boston Version), and a stronger revision of White Daisies (Boston Version).

- By Shannon Webb-Campbell

Unusual Suspects

Big Like This (Big Bash Records)

Everything about Scotland's Unusual Suspects is big! The band is big-16 pieces plus a guest singer. The sound is big, featuring as it does fiddles, bagpipes, accordions, whistles, harp, piano, bass, drums and a colossus of a brass section. The range of material is big, from



the barnstorming opening set Pressed for Time/Hull's Reel/St. Kilda Wedding to the tenderly rendered ballad Time Wears Awa'. Their talent is big, with heavy hitters such as Corrina Hewat (harp/vocal), Catriona Macdonald (fiddle), Calum MacCrimmon (pipes) and Ewan Robertson (guitar/vocal) well to the fore. Their ambition is big, as evidenced by their sweeping panoramic arrangements, majestic playing and a tower of powerful brass hooks that will keep the listener enthralled. The number of different influences in evidence is big, with traditional Scottish music sidling up next to jazz, rock, soul, R&B and worldbeat. Even the studio was big. This was recorded in the Main Auditorium of the Glasgow Royal Concert. Ouite how they got the roof back on the place afterwards is a mystery to me. Sprawling, ebullient, entertaining, satisfying, but most of all, BIG!

- By Tim Readman

Corrina Hewat

Harp I Do (Big Bash Records)

Corrina Hewat is a member of the very large Unusual Suspects, who is perhaps best known for her jazz-folk stylings on the electronic harp and her

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gorgeous singing. Harp I Do represents a different side of her music. It features mostly contemporary compositions by herself and the likes of Peter Ostroushko and Charlie McKerron, and is entirely instrumental. Her interpretation of the material is sensitive and her dexterity on the instrument is impressive. She has said this is down to the fact she has unusually big hands, which allow her to stretch and reach intervals other harpists can only dream of. The result is an incredibly full sound that has both depth and richness. This is a work of great purity and beauty that encourages quiet reflection and makes listening intently a most rewarding experience.

- By Tim Readman

Shelley O'Brien

Vivarium (Shellest Records)

Shelley O'Brien is an unexpected treasure. Her ethereal vocals are dream-like, soft, subtle. Think of her as a ukelele fairy, enchanting and mythical. From Paris to Iceland, O'Brien has been charming listeners since she jumped ship from being a cruise liner piano bar entertainer.

Opener Perfect Day shines. Turn to Spring keeps bad dreams at bay. Lullaby-like Valse A La Pluie is a perfect cure for longing. Swiftly, We Go transports. The Lives Of A Few Found Objects waltzes through the clouds. The sweetness continues with From The Caribou, a song of syrupy sentiment. Her heart goes out to gigantic rock formations in Mountain Hymn. Most dramatic. Let These Lights In soars with its high energy, drama and flourishes. Elm (These Burning Days) softly brings the record to a slow-dance close. Take a bow, O'Brien. It's well-earned.

- By Shannon Webb-Campbell



The Greg Cockerill Band

Festuca (Independent)

I love the title. Festuca is also known as fescue, a genus of grass oft times used for pasture and hay for livestock. Greg Cockerill, a son of the travelling military life, grew up in the prairies. Now based in Toronto, he shows his roots and inhabits his "Canadian Skin" proudly in this terrific new album.

Enlisting as co-producers his brother, Joshua, and Stew Crookes, they combine to deliver a stirring piece of work. Their artful arrangements drive this 10-song collection just where it should go—straight down the *Highway Tonight* from the first song.

Cockerill delivers his literate songs with honest and solid vocals. *Motel Bible*, with harmony courtesy of Damhnait Doyle, is a stand-out. Later on in the album, I just loved the line "Canadian highways can't keep this love apart" from a song entitled Ian and Sylvia. How wonderful is that?

Festuca, Greg's followup to his debut album, builds his reputation that, if the world is fair, should continue growing along with his audience. *Festuca* is country rock/folk at its best.

- By les siemieniuk

Annie Dressner

Strangers Who Knew Each Other's Names (Moon Rocks & Denim Music)

Transplanted from her native New York to the U.K., Annie Dressner has one of those voices the listener can find either quirkily refreshing or irritating. This critic finds it grating after about two numbers but others may certainly differ. Producer Anthony Rizzo, who also plays guitars and percussion on the disc, obviously finds it charming and features it, sometimes double-tracked, as the centrepiece of a nicely recorded debut album. The supporting playing is all top notch and her songs are original, also falling into the quirky category. An example: "Woke up in a carriage house / and there's whiskey on a broken glass / and I'm wearing a painter's cap / and it's morning in Brooklyn" (from *Brooklyn*).

She has an eye for original detail and a casual intimacy that communicates to the listener, if you can get past her tone. Time

will tell if this is a flash in the pan or the start of something with more lasting power.

- By Barry Hammond

Fiolministeriet

Fiolministeriet (GO' Danish Folk Music)

Fiolministeriet translates as Fiddle Ministry and after one quick listen to this trio's debut CD it will be immediately evident why they chose this as their name. Playing fiddle, viola, and cello, these three Danish players have an unmistakably classical tone to their music, despite their mostly traditional (or traditionally inspired) repertoire. But this is no rarified treatment of folk music by indulgent chamber musicians.

Indeed, Storm/Engeliska opens the recording in fine style with a gutsy Danish tune and a spirited English dance that bubbles with a very un-conservatory enthusiasm. The more introspective Victoria evokes the feeling of homesickness with a memorable original tune from fiddler Kirstine Sand. Elsewhere the trio prove themselves as capable singers on Katten og Vandalen and Lær Mig O Skov At Visne Glad (which marries poetry by Adam Oehlenschläger with a traditional Swedish tune). All in all, a very nice debut that bodes well for future offerings.

- By Richard Thornley

Kenny (Blues Boss) Wayne

An Old Rock on a Roll (Stony Plain)

At 67 years of age, Kenny Wayne is no spring chicken—but he plays like one. This spry, late-blooming boogie-woogie, barrelhouse blues machine has absorbed the styles of the great jazz and blues players alike and his gospel upbringing hasn't hurt his interpretation of the blues. With eight albums in

place and a larger-than-life personality, a recent yet surprising move from Electro-Fi to Stony Plain has brought with it certain benefits.

Namely, in this case, Duke Robillard. As great a player as Wayne is, you can't help but notice the guitar behind him. It picks up his game and elevates the material in no time. In fact, bassist Brad Hallen has the same effect, animating Wayne's original compositions as if he was always meant to be there. The first track gets off to a rocky start as the vocals quickly grow tedious, despite the strong (uncredited) B3 attempting to resuscitate the music.

However, Wayne locks down a great groove with Fantasy Meets Reality as the solid horns of Doug James, Sax Gordon, Doug Woolverton and Carl Querfurth dress the song up for dinner. Likewise, Heaven Send Me An Angel sees Wayne in great voice and piano while Robillard adds his patented touches. A slow-paced Don't Pretend feature Wayne's jazzy side as Robillard embellishes each velvet touch. Howlin' gets funky before Wild Turkey 101 Proof heads uptown—going down with a surprisingly



smooth finish. Drummer Mark Teixeira drives home the upbeat Way Overdue as Wayne serves up his rollicking barrelhouse, matched to smooth and soulful vocals, more so than on his Rocking Boogie Party, which pushes the rockin' at the expense of his vocals. A case in point is *Bring Back The Love*, underlining just how good a singer Wayne can be. A new label. A reinvigorated sound. And 13 songs designed to lift you out of the blues and send you on your way.

- By Eric Thom

Frederick Squire

Frederick Squire Sings the Shenandoah and Other Popular Hits (Blue Fog Recordings)

Frederick Squire is a hard guy to pin down. At one time he went by the name of Dick Morello in a band called Shotgun and Jaybird. He has collaborated with Julie Dorion on her solo works and as a member of Daniel, Fred and Julie. He hails from Ajax, ON, and currently is in Sudbury after a few years working out of Sackville, NB.

Well, the anonymity will hopefully end. He does sing *Shenandoah*—very well, in fact. The rest of the popular hits consist of achingly sad originals delivered simply and tastefully with a lovely tenor voice, guitar and some haunting pump organ.

Frederick has a knack for great titles such as *The Human Race Can Be a Very Nasty Animal, Every Dollar Bill Could Kill Me* and *All Things Past Serve To Guide You On Your Way.* He also has a knack for lovely lyrics:

"As you get old the price will grow for all of your transgressions."

Frederick Squire has given us a strong, melancholy record that belies its simplicity. All in all, a lovely piece of work.

- By les siemieniuk

Blick Bassy

Hongo Calling (World Connection)

As a young man in Cameroon, Blick Bassy formed his first band at age 17, and by age 22 was performing with the jazz group Macase, winning numerous music awards across Africa. Bassy relocated to France, where he released his debut album, *Leman*, on the World Connection label in 2009. Extensive touring in Japan, Brazil, and the U.S.A. followed.

All that experience is instantly audible on Bassy's second CD, Hongo Calling. The album's through-line posits a pilgrimage following the slave route from Cameroon to Brazil, through Benin, Senegal and Cape Verde. Bassy certainly sounds like a man who has found his way. The album rings with confidence, shaped by a distinctive signature sound.

Some well-known musicians have been invited to join him: bassist and vocalist Richard Bona, Malagasy accordionist Regis Gizavo, and Brazilian singer Lenine. The arrangements show a deftness, never feel crowded, while swelling with flute, kora, cavaquinho, calabash, ngoni, accordion, and more.

Bassy's voice is his most alluring feature. Using the rhythms of his native Cameroon, he lilts like a butterfly flitting from flower to flower.

As the CD's story of pilgrimage progresses, the songs journey through the musical traditions of the countries travelled. Bolo Mo is in a tradition from Benin, with peppery chanting, exhorting the traveller to, "Get up, walk and work hard if you want to reach your destination". Ndjeck brings together Brazilian singer Lenine, Richard Bona on guitars, and an especially spicy kora played by Sekou Kouyate. Lenine

also appears on *Fala Portugues*, extolling the brilliance of Brazilian music. The chorus has a great hook, and the kora replaces the guitar as lead string instrument while talking drum

With this album, Blick Bassy joins the A-list of international African artists.

chatters on the sidelines.

– By Lark Clark

Al Tuck

Under Your Shadow (New Scotland Records)

Feist has called Al Tuck a national treasure. If you haven't heard the popular singer/songwriter/guitarist, his latest disc is a great place to start. Since his 1994 debut on Arhoolie Records (Al Tuck & No Action), the Prince Edward Island-born and Halifax, NS-based artist has released seven previous discs but this might be his best. It captures all his mellowvoiced humour and incisive songwriting, which has been compared favourably to the likes of Randy Newman, as well as his distinctive guitar work in a variety of recording settings, all backed by topnotch players. Each song is a polished, yet informal, gem that shines in its individual setting.



Reviews

From the opening, Celtic-flavoured Slapping the Make On You, through the bluesy Hello, Prince Edward Island or Creole-inspired Wishing Well, to the echoing closing notes of the unlisted, biblical 12th bonus track Emmanuelle, it's quite simply a fine collection by one of Canada's top veterans.

- By Barry Hammond

The Long Notes

In the Shadow of Stromboli (Hobgoblin

The Long Notes are Glasgow's Jamie Smith on fiddle, Galway's Colette O'Leary on accordion and Londoner Brian Kelly on banjo and mandolin. They cut their





teeth together in London's Camden Town traditional music session scene. They usually add a singer and/or guitarist to their concert lineup and here that chair is taken by Dorset's Alex Percy on guitar and bass pedals. This release features songs and tunes from the Irish and Scottish traditional canon as well as some European and North American material. The playing is fluid and has a notable nimbleness to it. The quicker the tune the more relaxed they seem to be! The sound is bright and bouncy making it hard to sit still when they are on the hi-fi. I'd imagine they'd rock the house in a live setting. I'll certainly look forward to finding out if that holds true one day soon!

- By Tim Readman

Fraser Union

B.C. Songbook (Independent)

Fraser Union have been performing since the mid-1980s. These days their lineup is Henk Piket, Roger Holdstock, Barry Truter and Dan Kenning. They have always sung songs that tell stories of B.C. and on B.C. Songbook they have devoted the whole album to that theme. There's the tale of the loggers' hotel in Vancouver in Grand Hotel, a song about the miserable conditions inside the Steveston Village Cannery in Canning Salmon and a tribute to the steelworkers who lost their lives building the Second Narrows Bridge between Vancouver and the North Shore on The Bridge Came Tumbling Down. The instrumentation includes guitar, mandolin, banjo and Dobro. Their sound is somewhat old-fashioned-which I am sure is just the way they, and their fans, like it. There's no flashy playing or vocal gymnastics, just a variety of story songs sung with enthusiasm and commitment. Solid, dependable, simple and unpretentious.

- By Tim Readman

Elena Yeung

Dandelion (Independent)

Elena Yeung doesn't know the meaning of sophomore jinx. The second album from this Creston, BC, singer/songwriter/banjo player is chock full of new ideas that moves her to a new level. Her feet are planted in both the bluegrass and old-time genres but her head defies boundaries to give a truly "Yeungian" sound. The woman knows no limits.

Take, for example, the a cappella gospel song *Gonna Build Me Boat*. Would it sound good with a gospel group backing her up? Sure as the rain's gonna fall, and who does she get but The Persuasions, and goes all the way to New Jersey to record the track.

Yeung plays the rolling Scruggs style of banjo but how about a duet with a clawhammer player? I've never heard it done, and her interaction on *Banjo vs. Garden* with Chris Suen works beautifully. Definitely not duelling banjos.

In the old-time tradition, she delivers servings of crows, sparrows, trains, tragedy and a delightful kids' tune about popcorn. And Yeung's playing is more solid than ever. Clearly she's been spending too much time playing banjo and writing songs to get at those dandelions in the garden.

- By Mike Sadava

Danny Darst

American Songwriter (Altman Darst)

Americana generally delivers is great songs. American Songwriter is obviously targeting that audience. That Danny Darst is a terrific writer isn't in doubt. His first No. 1 hit came courtesy of Joe Stampley's rendition of Roll On Big Mama in 1974. The singer part of the equation is a little harder to buy from Darst, who might be better known in L.A. than Nashville. He's written music for several Jonathan Demme movies, including Silence of the Lambs and Melvin and Howard.

American Songwriter is a companion piece to a documentary by the same name. The ballads are more flattering to Darst's strangled vocals than the more uptempo tunes such as *Dreamcatcher*, where his limited range gets exposed.

Somebody's Daddy doesn't break any new ground but it is a beautifully written tune, and Roughrider is reminiscent of Ian Tyson at his Cowboyography best. Enjoy the melodies and the broad brush of Darst's lyrics and forgive his limited talents as a vocalist.

- By Ruth Blakely

Martin Sexton

Fall Like Rain (Kitchen Table Records)

Sexton travels closer to the AOR mainstream with this five-song EP, four of which are original tunes, the closer being a cover of Buffalo Springfield's For What It's Worth. The title track and One Voice Together will appeal to those who love positive affirmations in their music, or fans of Jack Johnson looking to broaden their record collections. Burlington has a bit more lyrical meat on its bones, a taste of the Sexton of old, melancholy and fatalistic, sentiments that can't be found on the ebullient Happy Anniversary



(Six Years).

Generally lightweight (and overly slick) songs aside,
Sexton is still an amazing and irrepressible singer, a blueeyed soulster saddled with the tag of folky, and he does some oddball things with the Springfield cover, taking it far beyond whatever parameters you may have imagined for it.

– By Tom Murray

The Black Lillies

100 Miles of Wreckage (Independent)

I've had this disc for several months and can't stop listening to it. This young Knoxville, TN, band would have been a regular at the Fillmore if they had been alive at the time. The Lillies are tagged in the Americana category, but this is a jam band extraordinaire.

Take the tune *Tall Trees*, which starts off with a dreamy groove and some surrealistic nonsense about trees walking, then morphs into the gospeltinged *100 Miles of Wreckage*, and comes back to the original song with a long, biting guitar solo. It's a glorious eight minutes and 42 seconds of psychedelia.

The Lillies have lots of chops,

both vocal and instrumental, with a plethora of electric and acoustic instruments, as well as a wide range of feel, from acoustic old-time to electric blues. As a whole, the disc embodies the spirit of '60s San Francisco, without sounding at all like the Grateful Dead.

- By Mike Sadava

Friend of All the World

The Wild (Independent)

Even though this second disc from Montreal indie folk band Friend of All the World is called *The Wild*, it's anything but. Perhaps a better title would have been *The Staid*, *The Sedate*, or *The Laid Back*. It may

Reviews

be a reference to the fact that main songwriter Robert Cole has become more collaborative since collecting the rest of the members via an ad on Craigslist and is venturing into a wider sonic territory than their 2009 debut, *Up These Branches*, but the sound, even with the wider palette, is as calm as clouds floating on a summer breeze.

There's nothing to suggest the unpredictable, predatory, or violent aspect of the title. The sound is more like you'd expect from a late-night campfire session, after the singalongs had finished, just as people were winding down, maybe having a cup of hot cocoa and getting ready to go to bed. It's a disc for calm reflection and meditation rather than cranking up the adrenalin. The group, with Celine Bianchi, Benoit Duval, Kenton Mail and Steph Park backing up Cole, makes very pleasant sounds-restful and serene, music for repose—rather than excitement.

- By Barry Hammond

Dale Ann Bradley

Somewhere South of Crazy (Compass)

One of the finest voices in country music has recorded an awfully fine bluegrass album. Let me clarify this: Dale Anne Bradley has been a bluegrass artist, winning the IBMA top



vocalist award umpteen times, but her voice deserves to be heard in the wider real country music world.

With first-class production by Alison Brown on her own boutique record label, and instrumental contributions by some of the best players in the bluegrass world—including fiddler Stuart Duncan, 19-year-old mandolin wunderkind Sierra Hull, guitarist Steve Gulley, Pam Tillis and Brown herself on banjo—this is a winner of a disc.

But it would probably work just as well with pedal steel guitars and electric guitars as Bradley has one of the purest country voices around. Her choice of songs is also interesting, including several originals as well as those from such great songwriters as Dallas Frazier, and a Seals and Crofts classic, *Summer Breeze*. As the announcer says after a live cut that ends the disc, "If that don't turn you on you don't have no switches."

- By Mike Sadava

Andrea Simms-Karp

Hibernation Nation (Independent)

Andrea Simms-Karp is forever wintering. Opening with Alternative to Flight, Simms-Karp waits out the storm with a toe-tapping acoustic ditty. With its darling banjo opening and soaring violin, Northern echoes the rhythm of a winter walk; pensive, slow and steady. After spending her life begrudging the tough winters in Ottawa, Simms-Karp has given into the long season and cold, creating a cosy album best heard beside a fireplace.

Whiteout dreamily and softly explores the emotions felt within a blizzard, both literally and figuratively. Grey brings us from the snowstorm into a lazy morning, a fog cap overhead.



The Strangest Ones is a subtle yet seductive little number with quiet banjo and twinkles of glockenspiel. *Timoneer* is part lullaby, part confession.

Andrea Harden's vocal layers, acoustic guitar and violin perfectly accompany Simms-Karp's loneliness. The album's closing number, *Magpie*, has a traditional East Coast feel, opening with a few stretches of accordion, mandolin and handclaps. In the hands of anyone else, an album based on winter would be depressing, but it's Simms-Karp's delicate voice that seems light and soothing. I'd be curious to know what sort of songs surface in autumn, summer or spring.

- By Shannon Webb-Campbell

Brock Zeman

Me Then You (Busted Flat Records)

When Lynn Miles, the 2011 Canadian Folk Music Awards English Songwriter of the Year winner, says this of Brock Zeman, I listen and agree: "Brock Zeman is a master songwriter, who writes with a maturity far beyond his chronological age. He digs in dark places and comes back with diamonds. He belongs on stage with the big boys".

Me Then You is Zeman's ninth full-length studio album featuring all his own material. Not bad for a young lad who just hit 30. This album has raised the bar yet again in presenting his creative genius, which is gaining him more and more notice. His storied lyrics delivered via Brock's road-weary voice often paint blue-collar, hard-livin' scenes filled with a constantly changing cast of unique characters who survive life's many challenges with a quirky ray of hope of love—lost or remembered. There's no fluff.

Recorded primarily at Brock's own studio, The Big Muddy, in the boonies north of Lanark, ON, the arrangements are brought to life by a great cast of his friends, most notably the multi-instrumentation of Blair



Hogan, Brock's sidekick on the road. Hogan, a quiet, shy person, lets his fingers speak his mind on anything with strings or keys, as tastefully descriptive as Zeman's lyrics. Add in haunting harmonies supplied by Hogan and sweet chanteuses in their own right, Kelly Prescott and Cindy Doire, and you've got technicolour scenes for your aural pleasure.

Have a listen to *Me Then You* and you'll see why I'm in such agreement with Lynn Miles. He's the real deal and lets his material speak for itself.

- By Steve Tennant

Jane Hawley & Aunt Betty's Band

Jane Hawley & Aunt Betty's Band (Independent/Rawlco Radio)

Jane Hawley has been kicking around the Alberta music scene for nigh on 20 years, paying her dues with the likes of Jr. Gone Wild, Beautiful Joe and her own various projects.

Her latest release, Jane Hawley & Aunt Betty's Band, has the feel of personal revelation, with originals such as Shopping for Love, Hey Mom and Givin' In. Hawley's plaintive voice shines through.

There are three covers on the eight-song disc, and if you are going to dip into someone else's bucket, why not ladle from the best. She puts her own stamp on *Wind Cries Mary* (Jimi Hendrix), *All I Know* (Jimmy Webb) and *For No One* (Sir Paul McCartney).

Hawley has assembled some quality musicians in aid of this project, including producer Tim Williams, longtime collaborator Tim Leacock on guitars, and Ron Casat on piano, who lends his own panache to the melody on *Wind Cries Mary*. Jane has been on hiatus; we should all be delighted she's back.

- By Doug Swanson

La Bottine Souriante

Appellation d'origine contrôlée (Borealis)

I don't think anyone would deny that these old boots needed a bit of a retread after their last and (seemingly) 300th disc proper, J'ai Jamais Tant Ri. The question on everyone's lips with this new disc is what kind of retread resulted: just new soles or a substantially new soul? Thankfully, the latter is more the case - new soul - courtesy of the new(er) faces filling out La Bottine's lineup: particularly singer-multi-instrumentalists Eric Beaudry and Benoit Bourque. Change is signalled with the taut, muscular bass line that kicks off the disc's opener, Cette bouteille-là, reminiscent of Bourque's days with Matapat. Eric Beaudry seems also to have brought some approaches from his old band, Norouet, witness the stark polyphony of Mon père and the wish-I-couldtell-you-what-it-is percussion on Intsusadi.

Sandy Silva is also in fine form, adding the sound of percussive dance to the more familiar podorhythmie that's characteristic of Québecois folk music. All in all a darn decent return to form. There's life in these boots yet!

- By Richard Thornley

Helen Austin

Treehouse and Song of the Week 2 (Independent)

Helen Austin has a real sweetness to her. Truth be told, she'd make a great children's entertainer. Her songs focus on climbing down from her home in the trees, whistling, and puppy love. Most songs aren't much longer than two minutes, always darling and playful.

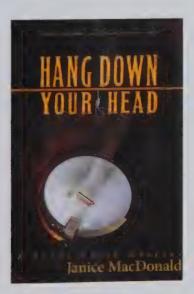
Treehouse is a 13-song collection clocking in at just over the half-hour mark. Something to Cry About, Take My Time, and



It Takes A Lifetime shows her potential as a songwriter.

With two albums in one year, her second release in 2011, Song of the Week 2 is another collection of quickies. I Love It All rouses sleepers from their slumber, coaxing listeners: "you've got to come out to play sometime". Keep up with her if you can on This Time. 'Til We Get Old is Austin's ode to growing old, and her toe-tapping It's Me is a contemporary crush song. Her musical game of tag, Ready Or Not, is catchy and perfect for toddlers learning to count. Song of the Week 2's closing send-off is tender with sweet harmonies and syrupy sentiments.

- By Shannon Webb-Campbell



Books

Hang Down Your Head

By Janice MacDonald

ISBN: 978-0-88801-386-6 / Ravenstone / 365pages /

paperback / \$16.00

The latest in Janice Mac-Donald's Randy Craig mystery series (following *The Next Margaret*, 1994, *Sticks & Stones*, 2001, and *The Monitor*, 2003) not only takes place in Edmonton, as usual, but is centred in the city's folk music scene—specifically the Smithsonian FolkwaysAlive! Collection at the University of Alberta and the Edmonton Folk Music Festival.

In the novel, Craig's background in writing and computer work lands her a coveted job working on the Folkways website. That is quickly jeopardized when the antagonistic son of the late rich donor, who is contesting the willed sponsorship that is financing her job, is murdered in a tunnel at a south side LRT station. He's been stabbed and a note reading, "Hang Down Your Head," quoting the folksong Tom Dooley, seems to connect the murder to the university and the collection.

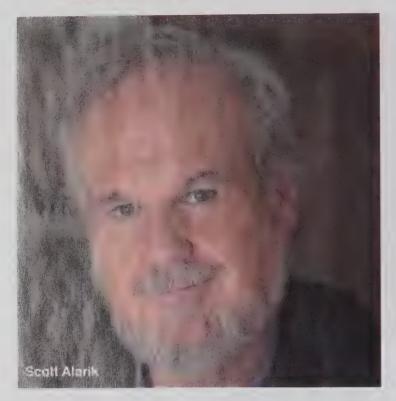
More crimes follow swiftly on the first. A co-worker is bludgeoned at the centre; a ritzy clothing store owned by the first victim's sister is burned down with an employee inside; another of her employees is found dead at the folk festival. Worse still, Randy seems to be a suspect in all these crimes, a fact that puts her boyfriend, police officer Steve Ferguson, in an awkward position.

As a mystery, the book is not so much about detection or a police procedural (though having Randy's boyfriend being a cop ensures a little of that). It's more from the cinematic approach of the Alfred Hitchcock *The Man Who Knew Too Much* or *North By Northwest* genre, where an innocent, ordinary person gets caught up in extraordinary events. The book has the relaxed pace of a summer in Edmonton rather than a motor-driven suspense thriller. There's tension, with the murders and attacks always in the background but, first and foremost, the book is about *atmosphere*.

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MacDonald does a terrific job of capturing both the academic world surrounding folk music, the atmosphere of the folk festival itself, as well as the people who populate that world. She's obviously a fan and her enthusiasm communicates itself to the reader. It's well nigh impossible to resist her love of both the music and the milieu. Part and parcel of the atmosphere is her depiction of the city itself. It's a love letter to Edmonton, too. She manages to make the city seem both exotic and familiar. Tourists, reading the book, will want to come here and citizens will appreciate how well she's captured it.

Besides the folk festival and the Folkways collection, the book is full of real places and attractions like the Heritage Days festival, restaurants such as the High Level Diner, Yanni's Taverna, Colonel Mustard, Tim Hortons, Java Jive, Whyte Avenue and the university itself during the summer. Real musicians also make appearances in the book. Everyone from Tom Paxton, Bill Bourne, Ferron, Mike Stack, Tim Hus, Harry Manx, Ben Sures and several others make cameos. The fictional characters seem as real as their actual counterparts. Dr. Cheryl Fuller, MacDonald's fictional character, seems a worthy stand-in for Dr. Regula Kureshi, the real head of the Folkways collection. Likewise,



Aric Skurdal takes the place of actual folk festival head honcho Terry Wickham. She also pays fitting tribute to actual Folkways figures such as Moses Asch and Dr. Michael Asch.

For anyone who thinks it wouldn't be possible to murder someone at the folk festival in the middle of such a huge crowd, she comes up with a method that's disturbingly plausible.

There's very little in the way of mis-steps, either. You could quibble with a couple of the cinematic references. Craig gets a fairly obscure one in a comparison of the murder mystery Blow Up, a Michaelangelo Antonioni foreign film starring the late British actor David Hemmings playing a photographer, with Brian Di Palma's Blow Out, about a film sound recorder played by John Travolta. Yet, she misses a rather obvious one regarding, "the pros from Dover," from M*A*S*H with Elliot Gould and Donald Sutherland, which had far wider distribution and publicity than either of the first two films.

Still, all in all, it's a well-written and entertaining book with a positive outlook on both folk music and the city of Edmonton. I look forward to more of both Randy Craig and Janice MacDonald.

- By Barry Hammond

Revival

By Scott Alarik ISBN: 978-1-931807-91-3 / Songsmith / 314pages / paperback / \$22.00

The functions of critic and novelist don't always sit comfortably together but Scott Alarik's case is an exception. A folk music critic for the Boston Globe for more than 20 years and a singer/songwriter himself (he performed regularly on A Prairie Home Companion), he's now a novelist who has written not only a gripping novel but one that takes place in the folk music world and, in many ways, defines and demonstrates what's unique and special in that world.

The novel centres on Nathan Warren, a singer/songwriter/guitarist who runs open-mic nights and jam sessions at Dooley's, a Boston pub. Once considered the artist most

likely to be "the next big thing" before an unreleased album and years of drinking scuttled his career, he's now clean and sober and an elder statesman of the local scene. Into this milieu comes Kit Palmer, another promising young singer/songwriter who plays fiddle and guitar. She's extremely talented but has a paralyzing case of stage fright. As they get to know each other, Kit creates both artistic and personal sparks that clarify Nathan's past, focus his energies, revive his life, and create difficult choices for him as both a man and an artist.

Alarik obviously knows the world of the Boston folk scene intimately but his great skill is in conveying that understanding through intelligent, well-developed characters, scenes and a tactile atmosphere. He's obviously also given a great deal of thought as to what sets folk music apart from every other musical scene and his insights are vivid, clear, and thought-provoking. He captures the entire world of the music, not just the musicians and personalities but the critics, music companies, managers, publicists, sound people and volunteers who organize the venues in coffee houses, bars, festivals, camp fire singalongs and even house parties.

Folk music, like the title of the book, is a music of constant revival and it's both the theme of the book and its plot. "Tradition," he says at one point, "is a living thing... It's a force of nature, a river still running, its current denying our attempts to freeze it in time, file it away, fix its origin or destination."

There's a great scene where Nathan and his friend, the fictional critic, Ferguson, are discussing the music and Ferguson points out the apparent conflict that so-called "purists" sometimes miss:

"There's a funny thing about purists," Ferguson said, "I have this weird vantage point because I'll be writing about bluegrass one week, Celtic the next, then maybe the blues. In every kind of music, there are certain artists the purists point to and say, 'That's the yard-stick. That's when it was pure, so that's how it should always be played'."

"But here's what's odd," he whispered, as if he was sharing a great secret. "The artists the purists point to are always people who changed the music. Always. Think about it. In bluegrass, it's Bill Monroe and the Stanley Brothers. But man, they invented a whole new way of playing. In Irish music, it's Turloch O'Carolan, the blind harper from the 1600s. But he broke all the rules; I mean, he wrote chamber music! The jazz purists point to Louis Armstrong, and he's another guy who changed everything ... purists set the rules by exalting people who broke the rules."

There are these kinds of insights every few pages in the book. At one point the protagonist points out, when discussing carols, that, "the original meaning of the word carol was simply a song meant for dancing, used for rituals, especially to mark the passing of the seasons. Once, long ago, carols for spring, summer, and fall were as important as Christmas carols."

The characters in the book are just as important as the insights, however, and it would be a very indifferent reader who doesn't become emotionally involved with Nathan, Kit and their friends. *Revival* is a joyous celebration of life and music and one that deserves to be widely read.

- By Barry Hammond

___ Le Quartier Français



Le démon se déguise

Avec un nom comme Belzébuth, il est évident que ce sextuor ne chante pas de cantiques. Leur musique, bien que solidement ancrée dans la culture québécoise, aime à s'écarter dans les traditions françaises et irlandaises, pour notre plus grand plaisir. Tony Montague présente ses respects au diable. Traduit par Véro Garneau-Allard

e diable, «Old Nick», semble être partout dans la culture traditionnelle québécoise; caché dans l'ombre, rôdant autour de l'église ou de la grange, guettant les passants aux coins des rues. «Le yab'» est présent dans d'innombrables chansons, blagues, histoires et légendes. Excellent violoneux, il adore la musique, la danse et bien sûr, faire la fête.

Il y a dix ans, de jeunes musiciens ont eu beaucoup d'audace envers le prince des ténèbres en baptisant leur groupe Belzébuth, variante de l'anglais «Beelzebub», un surnom très ancien de Lucifer, et en intitulant leur excellent premier album Les Péchés du Diable dont la pochette est agrémentée de la silhouette d'un diable noir ailé muni d'un violon.

«Ailleurs qu'au Québec, les gens pensent souvent que nous sommes en quelque sorte sataniques, mais ce n'est pas du tout le cas», explique en riant Jean-Benoît Landry, chanteur du groupe. «Nous empruntons son aspect folklorique, habituellement plus comique que sinistre. La légende qui nous inspire le plus est celle où il se présente dans une soirée, visiteur mystérieux coiffé d'un large chapeau, et se met à jouer du violon», raconte Landry, lui-même violoniste, de même que percussionniste et chanteur du sextuor. «C'est un musicien fantastique et tout le monde se met à danser comme des fous, surtout les filles. Vous imaginez la suite. C'est à ce diable-là que nous faisons référence, celui qui "endiable la veillée"».

Forte d'une variété instrumentale, la musique de Belzébuth est riche en couleurs. Aux côtés de Jean-Benoît aux percussions, s'ajoutent Philippe Jetté, accordéoniste et chef tapeur de pied; le guitariste Francis Marion; Jean-Michel Roch, à la basse et au banjo; Loui-Vincent Gagnon, à la mandoline et au bouzouki et Marie-Maxime Piché Richer, au violon. Comme beaucoup de groupes traditionnels avant-gardistes du Québec tels que La Bottine Souriante, La Volée de Castors, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer, André Marchand et Yves Lambert, Belzébuth est originaire de Lanaudière. Les Français du XVIIe siècle sont les premiers

à avoir peuplé cette région de terres agricoles et de forêts située à environ 100 km au nord de Montréal. Des Acadiens de la Déportation ont suivi au XVIIIe siècle, de même que des soldats écossais retraités de l'armée et des immigrants irlandais. Cette cohabitation allait faire naître une nouvelle identité culturelle.

«La tradition est très vivante», affirme Landry. «Pendant le temps des Fêtes, il y a beaucoup de spectacles de groupes traditionnels dans différents bars de Joliette [la plus grande ville de Lanaudière] au cours d'une même soirée. Ici, comme dans les pubs irlandais, il y a régulièrement des jamsessions. De plus, depuis presque 10 ans, nous avons aussi le CRAPO dans la petite ville de Saint-Jean-de-Matha.»

L'acronyme (au jeu de mot bien pensé) désigne le Centre régional d'animation du patrimoine oral. «On y retrouve une grande quantité d'archives de musique, de chansons et d'histoires appartenant au folklore de cette région», poursuit Landry. «Le CRAPO, ce n'est pas seulement ca. Des gens ont été engagés afin de récolter du matériel de la communauté et il y a un café-bistro où on tient des concerts et des présentations spéciales». En plus de bénéficier du matériel du CRAPO et d'autres centres pour leurs chansons, le groupe puise parmi les collections de documents imprimés comme celle du grand Marius Barbeau (1883-1969), les ressources dans Internet, les rencontres avec des confrères musiciens durant les festivals et le vaste répertoire des amis et de la famille.

Belzébuth fête ses 10 ans en force cette année avec la récente sortie de leur troisième album Suite 8. L'album s'ouvre sur le rythme régulier de la podorythmie de Jetté, présent sur beaucoup de titres de l'album, avec la chanson de mensonges «Jean-Claude Marquis». La pièce suivante, «Knocknagow», commence avec une suite répétée d'accords sinistres accompagnés de mandoline introduisant Roch qui se lance dans une gigue irlandaise au banjo, dont le tempo et le rythme évoluent vers l'acadienne «Reel Anne-Marie». Le groupe va à toute allure, mais son jeu reste précis et solide; ses arrangements, intelligents et variés.

L'entraînante «Hommage à Bernard Brisson» est un hommage que Jetté rend à son grand-oncle récemment décédé qui était un violoneux du Grand Rang de St-Jacques. Jetté a fait beaucoup de collecte de matériel, en particulier dans les paroisses acadiennes de Lanaudière. Suite 8 comprend aussi «Paradis sur terre», première chanson originale d'un membre du groupe. Célébrant les habitants acadiens, elle a été

Le Quartier Français —

adoptée comme chanson thème du Festival acadien de la Nouvelle-Acadie.

La musique de Belzébuth, bien qu'ancrée dans la musique traditionnelle québécoise, aime puiser dans d'autre répertoires. Deux pièces sur Suite 8 viennent de France. «Knocknagow», une brillante version de «The Morning Dew» et de «Tom Busby's Jig», provient du répertoire irlandais, comme beaucoup d'autres sur l'album. Sur Les Péchés du Diable, un des arrangements contient la version originale instrumentale de «Feuille d'Arabe», aux sonorités distinctives du Moyen-Orient. Sur Suite 8, Landry 1 emmené «Les croisades», une pièce exceptionnelle aux influences hispaniques et judéo-espagnoles. «Nous sommes très ouverts à ce que nous entendons dans les restivals et nous nous en imprégnons», dit Landry. «Alors quand vient le temps de créer nos propres arrangements, nous nous laissons aller un peu, nous élargissons nos horizons et mélangeons les genres».

Le prince des ténèbres est partout sur Suite 8, mais c'est un personnage bien terre-à-terre, qui traverse facilement cultures et époques tout en colorant l'imaginaire québécois. Belzébuth et les étiquettes de bière le confirmeront. «Il n'est pas nécessairement méchant», affirme Landry. «Il ajoute du piquant dans la vie des gens, tout comme nous aimons égayer les veillées et faire danser et chanter tout le monde.»

Heavy Songé

juste parce que ça sonnait bien, tout comme les chansons poétiques et mystérieuses que ses membres écrivent. The campuell examine attentivement le territoire géographique et intellectuel qui donne à leur nouvel album Malai Marce, un esprit. Traduit par Varo

la fois aérien, poétique et foisonnant, l'album *Metal Meets* du groupe torontois Ohbijou nous transporte dans un voyage musical traversant terres humides, volcans, lacs et chutes mystérieuses.

S'ouvrant avec «Niagara Falls», une pièce qui frappe malgré sa simplicité, Metal Meets explore différents paysages et territoires où plane le mystère sur fond de mélodies. L'auteure-compositrice-interprète Casey Mecija raconte l'histoire de deux amoureux qui plient bagage pour aller sen-



tir le vent de sa voix qui séduit et émerge, accompagnant la progression de la guitare et des riffs puissants.

Au plus fort de la chanson, elle chante: Je vais te suivre. J'ai rêvé de cet amour, un souvenir qui revient. «Je lisais beaucoup d'œuvres de Dionne Brand durant cette période et elle abordait le sujet de la mémoire comme étant quelque chose qui persiste toujours», raconte Mecija. «J'ai essayé d'intégrer cette idée aux paroles. J'ai pris l'idée de l'amour et j'ai essayé de l'explorer en utilisant des images puissantes, comme des chutes.»

Créé durant diverses retraites dans le Nord de l'Ontario, l'album *Metal Meets* et ses onze pièces est plus puissant et plus sombre que le lumineux *Beacons* paru avant. Pour un groupe profondément influencé par la ville de Toronto, le point de vue de *Metal Meets* couvre aujourd'hui un panorama global avec des perspectives d'Asie, d'Europe et d'Amérique de Nord. L'album a été enregistré au Breakglass Sudios de Montréal avec le réalisateur Jace Lasek du groupe The Besnard Lakes.

Mecija décrit *Metal Meets* comme une œuvre poétique: «"*Metal Meets*" est une chanson sur l'album, mais c'est aussi deux mots qui reviennent à plusieurs reprises dans différentes pièces de l'album», révèle Mecija. «La chanson elle-même est une chanson d'amour. Je dis toujours qu'un album est une histoire d'amour, une tentative d'explorer les relations, si fondamentales, entre deux personnes, peu importe qui. Je

pense que l'idée derrière "*Metal Meets*" est celle qui représente le mieux ce que nous souhaitions faire avec cet album.»

Pendant l'écriture de *Metal Meets*, Mecija travaillait sur sa maîtrise en sociologie, le nez dans les livres durant des mois. Le roman en vers d'Anne Carson *Autobiography of Red*, inspiré des Travaux d'Héraclès et du mythe de Géryon, a beaucoup influencé sa plume. L'auteure est reconnue pour son style dépouillé, plein de finesse et riche en métaphores, ce qui ressort de l'écriture de Mecija. «C'est un des plus beaux livres que j'ai lus», dit-elle. «Son écriture est si puissante et dramatique, mais si simple. C'est ce que j'essaie d'atteindre dans mes propres compositions.»

Dans un passage d'Autobiography of Red, Carson écrit: «Les mots résonnent. Si vous les laisser aller, ils font ce qu'ils veulent et ce qu'ils ont à faire.» Mecija sait quand les mots sont justes: soutenus par la mélodie, la chanson résonne dans l'espace et se dirige droit au cœur. Dans la magnifique et émouvante «Scalpel Blade», elle songe: J'ai rêvé que tu étais la mer; un scalpel en moi. Tu m'as laissé entrer. J'ai marché où tu étais passé.

«La musique et les paroles arrivent habituellement en même temps. Je m'assois au piano ou je prends ma guitare et j'essaie de faire sortir tout en même temps. Parfois j'écris des idées pour mes chansons, mais habituellement je crée tout en même temps.» Ses phrases courtes, sa réflexion sur le rêve et sur la mémoire

Le Quartier Français

sont des thèmes récurrents sur l'album. L'exploration concrète et abstraite des lieux et des idées a créé le son et les thèmes de *Metal Meets*.

«Nous avons passé beaucoup de temps en tournée avec le dernier album Beacons. Nous avons joué à l'étranger et passé du temps sur la route, loin de la maison. Le fait d'être séparés de nos proches à Toronto et de partir à la découverte de nouveaux horizons nous a fait grandir en tant que groupe et en tant qu'individu. Nous portons un regard plus complexe, plus affûté sur le monde. Je crois que la séparation et le voyage ont eu une grande influence sur le nouvel album», confie Mecija.

Ohbijou est le projet de multi-instrumentistes qui considèrent la musique comme une famille. Casey chante et joue de la guitare, du piano et du ukulélé; sa sœur Jennifer Mecija joue du violon, du hamichord, du glockenspiel, du mélodica et fait les harmonies vocales. Heather Kirkby est à la basse et au banjo, tandis que James Bunton prête son talent à la batterie et à la trompette. Anissa Hart est au violoncelle et Ryan Carley, au piano, au synthétiseur, au glockenspiel, au piano électrique et au clavecin. «Notre nom est venu spontanément, c'est comme un mot tendre», lance Mecija. «Il sonnait bien et correspondait à notre esthétique; et au son que nous essayons de créer.»

Contrairement à *Metal Meets*, qui a un penchant sombre, *Beacon*, paru en 2009, est rempli de lumière. Leur premier album, *Swift for Troubling Times* (2006), donnait le ton de ce qui allait devenir l'un des groupes canadiens les plus créatifs et charmants. Au lieu de s'enfoncer dans une direction, *Metal Meets* accorde à chaque instrument son espace. Chaque arrangement, chaque note a été méticuleusement choisie.

«L'écriture de cet album témoigne d'une plus grande maturité. Nous avons vraiment réfléchi à la meilleure façon de procéder; le fait de s'en tenir à cette décision était déjà mature», note Mecija. «Nos albums précédents étaient vraiment dispersés: ça allait dans toutes les directions. Nous avions besoin de nous isoler, de travailler dur et de créer quelque chose de cohérent.»

La vie à Toronto déborde d'activités et de choses à faire. Pendant la conception de *Metal Meets*, la péninsule Bruce était un incontournable pour Ohbijou, c'est là qu'ils allaient se retirer de la ville et nulle part ailleurs. «Nous sommes chanceux de vivre à Toronto: tous ces amis qui font de la musique géniale, cette communauté,

ce réseau de musiciens», souligne-t-elle. «Le groupe Snowblink qui nous accompagne en tournée est formé d'un couple qui compose des airs magnifiques, une musique superbement construite.»

«Nous regardions leur prestation hier soir et je me disais: "j'ai besoin de pratiquer plus ma guitare". Je crois que les influences les plus grandes sont tout près. Je suis si chanceuse d'écouter ce que mes amis font et de les voir aller. Ça m'encourage à améliorer notre art.»

La Bottine Souriante

Appellation d'origine contrôlée (Borealis)

Je crois que personne ne pourrait nier que les vieilles bottines avaient besoin d'un peu de repos après leur plus récent et 300e album à ce qu'il paraît, J'ai jamais tant ri. Tout le monde se pose la question: «Les bottines se sont-elles contentés de changer leurs semelles ou en ont-elles profiter pour acquérir un nouveau souffle?». Heureusement, la réponse est «nouveau souffle», grâce aux nouveaux visages de la formation, en particulier les chanteurs-multi-instrumentistes Éric Beaudry et Benoît Bourque. La basse musclée et tendue annonce le changement dès la première pièce, «Cette bouteille-là», évoquant l'époque où Bourque jouait avec Matapat. Éric Beaudry semble avoir lui aussi apporté l'influence de son ancien groupe Norouet, comme en témoigne la polyphonie austère de «Mon père» et les percussions que-je-ne-saurais-comment-qualifier de «Intsusadi». On reconnaît la podorythmie caractéristique de la musique traditionnelle québécoise agrémentée par les danses percussives d'une Sandy Silva en pleine forme. Le retour des bottines est réussi: elles sont encore pleines de vie!

- Par Richard Thornley
- Traduit par Véro Garneau-Allard





The Opinion Page



David Newland, musician and editorin-chief of Roots Music Canada, provides a personal insight into 'crowd funding'—whereby performers appeal to fans to invest in their projects.

arlier this winter, singer/songwriter Corin Raymond vaulted himself into the public eye with a funding drive that did double duty as a publicity stunt—or perhaps it was the other way around. The superbly executed ploy was simple: Corin Raymond asked his audience to fund his new album.

It so happened that the funding was in the form of Canadian Tire money, which generated a lot of headlines, and a lot of 5 and 10-cent notes. They're as good as cash for Corin's purposes, and his new album is off to the races. Such is the magic of crowd funding, also known as asking your audience for money.

Most independent musicians—that means nearly all folk and roots musicians—can't save up the tens of thousands of dollars it may cost to do a decent album. When you add the costs of a professional producer, session musicians, studio time, mixing, mastering, design and manufacture, the sum is simply out of reach.

For more and more artists, crowd funding offers the kind of support a few lucky ones used to get from record labels. In our highly connected era, Facebook and other social media tools allow artists to maintain near-constant contact with their fans at the grassroots level. That means the audience most willing to spend money on their product is always within reach.

Indeed, the grassroots artist's fans today may feel a greater sense of collective investment around an artist and what they may represent. Certainly, such sentiments reached fevered pitch at the height of Corin Raymond's campaign: in his fervent advocacy of the 'small time,' he even proactively promised he wouldn't take funding from Canadian Tire if they offered it!

As difficult as other aspects of the folk-singer's life may be, it's now relatively easy to go to your fan base and ask them to invest in an album.

I've just been through this process myself, raising the money to make my new CD, *Give It A Whirl*. I had been able to borrow enough money to fund the production but I had run out by the time it came to actually manufacturing the disk. So I turned to my audience, looking for help in raising a smaller but still significant amount: roughly \$3,000 for design and duplication.

Asking the audience was a humbling experience. Not having hit on Corin's brilliant idea of asking for donations in an undervalued currency, I was loath to simply stick out my cap. It was important for me to offer my audience something tangible in return for what they were willing to give. So I did something I had first seen Aengus Finnan do, more than a decade ago, and have seen many other musicians do since: I created 'packages' to solicit various levels of support, on a value-for-investment basis.

A \$25 donation would pre-buy a signed CD sent to the donor's door, but a \$100 donation would purchase all three of my CDs, including a signed copy of the new one featuring your name in the liner notes, with my fervent thanks forever enshrined in ink. For \$175 you could buy all of the above plus a ukulele and a lesson, and for \$350 I did a private house concert.

Most people were happy to do the CD pre-purchase, but a surprising number wanted in at the \$100 level. That taught me a lot about how seriously the audience takes the artist's situation.

I found crowd funding uncomfortable at first but in the long run I couldn't argue with its effectiveness, nor its lasting lessons. I didn't just get to make an album that

might have been forever stuck in a hard drive somewhere; I also learned just how much my fans, family and friends believed in me. We can all use that sort of boost in self-esteem from time to time.

Given my relatively modest goals, I did the project the old-fashioned way: I posted the info on my website, promoted it through Facebook and Twitter, told the audience at gigs, and kept track of it all on Google spreadsheets. But that makes me a throwback. Crowd funding is so widespread today that highly sophisticated websites exist to manage fundraising projects.

I first heard of such software in 2010, when Christine Bougie (already a ground-breaking blogger, as well as a superb lapsteel guitarist and percussionist) funded her CD *Aloha Supreme* through Kapipal, which caters not just to artists but to entrepreneurs of any kind.

More recently, multi-award-winning Halifax singer/songwriter Rose Cousins used Kickstarter to facilitate fundraising for her new CD, the aptly named *We Have Made a Spark*, released Feb. 28 of this year. Kickstarter has hosted crowd funding projects ranging from espresso makers to iPod docks, some exceeding a million dollars in funding.

While it may be a while before a folk artist pulls in that kind of money, it won't be a surprise when they do. Rose Cousins exceeded her \$20,000 Kickstarter target by 25 per cent, such is the passion of her audience and the success of her outreach, including superb video support. Corin Raymond's big-time small-time "ask" has earned him more than national exposure: the counter on his fundraising website, Don't Spend It Honey, is up to \$2,500 as of press time. That's a pile of bills big enough for Scrooge McDuck to dive into.

Crowd funding is even coming into its own beyond the realm of raising cash for CDs. Recently, the bright young P.E.I. musician Meaghan Blanchard earned a spot in a showcase at the prestigious Folk Alliance International Conference but didn't have the money to make the trip. Blanchard posted a note on her Facebook page, explaining the opportunity and asking her friends and fans for their support. She got the thousands of dollars she needed in less than a day. It's a reminder that behind every folksinger stands a crowd of great folks.

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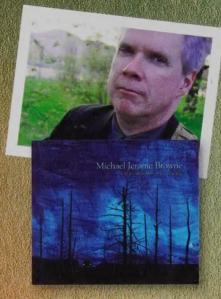
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What do these people have TO DO WITH FOLK MUSIC?



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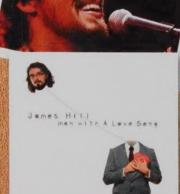
MICHAEL JEROME BROWNE



O W AVA SEED AND SCHROER SNUALA KINNEDY



LA BOTTINE SOURIANTE



JAMES HILL



MIGHTY POPO



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